[BURY, ARTHUR]

THE NAKED GOSPEL.

DISCOVERING

I. What was the Gospel which our LORD and his Apostles preached?

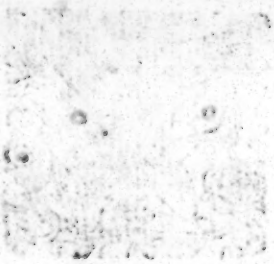
II. What Additions and Alterations later ages have made in it?

III. What Advantages and Damages have thereupon ensued?

PART I. *Of FAITH.*

By a true Son of the Church of England.

Printed in the Year 1690.



THE CONTENTS.

CHAP. I.

QU. I. *What was that Gospel which our* LORD *and his Apostles preached as necessary for salvation?* Pag. 1

CHAP. II.

Of FAITH, *in what sence it justifieth?* 6

CHAP. III.

What figure FAITH *made in Natural Religion?* 13

CHAP. IV.

Credulity is not FAITH, *but an Opposite Vice.* 19

CHAP. V.

Why FAITH *maketh a greater figure under the Gospel, than it did under the Law?* 23

CHAP. VI.

Of Faith in Christ, as Saviour of the World. 33

CHAP. VII.

Of Belief, with mere respect to the Person of Christ. Inquisitiveness concerning his Incarnation censured: I. Because Impertinent. 42

CHAP. VIII.

II. It is fruitleſs towards the Enquirer's own Satisfaction. 45

CHAP. IX.

III. It is Dangerous. 52

CHAP. X.

Of the Word or Matter which is the object of FAITH. 60

CHAP. XI.

Of the Manner of the Reſurrection, whether in the ſame Body or another? 69

ENQUIRY II. *What Changes or Additions later Ages have made in Matter of FAITH?* 78

ENQUIRY III. *What Damages or Advantages have enſued upon the Changes and Additions which later Ages have made in the Goſpel?* 90

The Concluſion. 101

THE

The PREFACE.

THAT the Goſpel, which at its firſt appearance in the world made ſuch great and ſpeedy conqueſts over its oppoſite powers, ſhould in theſe later Ages be ſo far from making ſuch large *ſtrides*, yea or the leaſt *ſtep* of further *progreſs*, that it hath been driven out of many of the Provinces it had gained; this is by Some objected againſt the Providence of God, and the Truth of the Goſpel, and by the Beſt lookt upon with wonder.

Time was, when the Fathers and Apologiſts of the Chriſtian Churches pleaded This for an evidence of our Lord's being the true Meſſia, that in him the Promiſe was fulfilled, which gave him *the Heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermoſt parts of the earth for his poſſeſſion.* And particularly St. *Auguſtin* thus argued for the truth of his Reſurrection, the corner-ſtone of the Chriſtian faith: *The ſame Spirit of God which foretold the Reſurrection of Chriſt, foretold alſo that the Doctrine thereof ſhould be publickly profeſſed and believed in the world: and One was altogether as unlikely as the Other; but the Later we ſee in all ages ſince Chriſt's death accompliſhed, why then ſhould we doubt of the Former?*

And if we duly conſider how incredible it was, that a poor, deſpiſed, perſecuted, and at laſt crucified vagabond, ſhould by the preaching of a few fiſhermen, ſo prevail over the oppoſite powers of the world, that the greateſt Princes ſhould place his Croſs above their Crowns as their beſt ornament and protection; This ſingly conſidered, muſt claim a belief, that as it is *marvellous in our eyes*, ſo it was the *Lord's doing*. If from the power of the Sword we paſs to that of the Pen, and conſider that Twelve ignorant fiſhermen baffeled the celebrated Learning of the Scribes among the Jews, and the Philoſophers among the Greeks; theſe triumphs of the Ignorant over the Learned will appear no leſs admirable, than thoſe of the Poor

over Princes: And when to this doubly wonderful Event, we add the no leſs wonderful Prediction, which at the time of its publication muſt appear no leſs Mad, than now Miraculous; it muſt ſeem equally incredible that this concurſ of ſo many wonders, ſhould be the effect of leſs than Divine power and wiſdom: and conſequently Such a prophecy So fulfilled, muſt evidence the author to be, what he declared himſelf, *the Son of God.*

YET ſhould one of *Mahomet*'s Prieſts now mount the ſame Chair, might he not with (at leaſt) the ſame Force, preſs the ſame Argument in behalf of that lewd Impoſtor? Might he he not argue that the wonderful progreſs of the Goſpel was indeed a powerful evidence of its divine authority; but withall it muſt be an equally powerful one for That of the *Alcoran*. For as the miraculous victories of a fugitive people over the *Canaanites*, join'd with the Prophecies which foretold them, were a good evidence of the Divine authority of *Moſes* and his Laws; and the victories of the Goſpel over That Law, were an evidence of the greater authority of the Goſpel; ſo the victories of the *Alcoran* over that Goſpel, muſt be an evidence, that as the Religion of *Moſes* was better than that of the *Canaanites*, and the Religion of *Chriſt* better than that of *Moſes*, ſo muſt the Religion of *Mahomet* be better than that of *Chriſt*.

Thus may a Mahumetan either Diſarm us of St. *Auguſtin*'s argument, or Retort it againſt us: For either it is of no force at all, or of ſo much more force for *Mahomet*, by how much more he hath prevailed over the Churches of Chriſt.

AND that it is of no force at all, ſome may infer from the contrary conducts of the planters of thoſe two Religions: For the Goſpel ſhed no blood, but of its own Profeſſors; kindled no fires, but thoſe that devoured its own Martyrs; dethroned no Prince, but the Prince of the power of the air, nor Him neither by any other weapons but Preaching and Suffering: Whereas *Mahomet* and his followers propagated his Doctrines together with their Dominions, by Fire and Sword: And ſince this later way is no leſs contrary to the nature of God, than to the Precepts,

cepts, as well as the way of planting of the Goſpel; ſince its author was no other than a lewd brainſick Scoundrel, and his Doctrines (as far as they are His) no better than extravagant whimſies, or lewd panders to luſt; Such a progreſs of Such a Religion, is ſo far from an argument of its Divine authority, that it is far leſs impious to impute its proſperity, either to mere Chance, or (as ſome Aſtrological fancies do) to the motion of the Heavens, (carying Religion and Learning from the Eaſtern to the Weſtern regions of the world,) than to accuſe God's providence of injuſtice to his Truth, and the ſouls of the inhabitants of ſo great a part of Chriſtendom.

By ſuch diſcourſes do ſome plead, not only againſt the Chriſtian, but All religion: And thoſe who dare not thus Arraigne or Renèg God's Providence, cannot avoid admiring its Conduct, as no leſs contrary to that loving kindneſs which the Goſpel proclaims, than to the means whereby it was firſt planted.

BUT if on the other ſide the Modern Goſpel differ as much from the Primitive in its Doctrines, as it doth in its Succeſſes; If it be ſo changed, that were any Apoſtle to return into the world, he would be ſo far from Owning, that he would not be able to Underſtand it; the Change of God's Providence in ſuch a change of the Goſpel, will be ſo far from Invalidating, that it will Double the force of St. *Auguſtin*'s argument.

For it proceeded not upon the ſingle topick of Proſperity, but upon the concurſ of an admirable Event, with an admirable Prophecy; and its ſtrength is now doubled by the addition of another like concurſ of a contrary Event with a contrary Prediction: So it is thus unhappily improved, *The ſame Spirit of God which foretold that the Goſpel ſhould be preached over the whole world, and performed it by the miniſtery of a few Fiſhermen; 'foretold alſo to one of the firſt-born Churches, and thereby to all others, that if ſhe repented not he would remove her Candleſtick out of its place; and this was at that time no leſs unlikely, than it had be'n that ever it ſhould be placed there; yet this we ſee do'n, and that by a quite contrary miniſtery:* by the Sword of a baſe ſlave and his few followers, and by

Doctrines as weak as that ſword when firſt unſheathed, and leud as thoſe rogues that managed it; how then can we doubt, but the One as well as the Other were ordered by the ſame Providence which foretold them?

If we yet doubt, let us conſider particulars. Firſt, the Spirit did not threaten to Extinguiſh the Light, but only to *remove the Candleſtick out of its place*; and acccordingly, the Light is not quite Extinguiſhed, but only Removed; the Goſpel hath not Loſt ground, but Exchanged; for *America* amply repaireth the loſſes ſuſtained in *Europe*, *Aſia*, and *Africk*.

Again, it is obſervable that the candleſtick was thus removed by the light of its own candel; for whereas the Weſtern churches were terribly overrun by a multitude of heathen nations, their Religion as certainly prevailed over the Minds of the conquerors, as the invaders Sword did over their Country; the Religion of *Mahomet* on the contrary ever kept pace with his and his followers ſwords, and where it ſubdued the Country, was ſure to vanquiſh the Goſpel. If we examin the reaſon of this difference, we ſhall find that the Idolatry of the heathen could not withſtand the Power of the Goſpel, bicauſe it had nothing of its Light; but *Mahomet* profeſſed all the articles of the Chriſtian faith, and declared himſelf not an Apoſtate, but Reformer; Pretending to purify it from the corruptions wherewith it had been defiled, and perfect it with additionals, he framed ſuch a jargon as appeared moſt ſerviceable to his Ends, and moſt ſuitable to his Luſts.

So, from the proſperity of the *Alcoran* we have an argument for the Divinity of the Goſpel, as invincible againſt all power but what was derived from it ſelf; and for the juſtice of God's Providence, which as it found corruptions in the Churches of Chriſt, ſufficient to provoke his Judgments; ſo did it truth enough in the *Alcoran*, to prefer That, above all other religions, to the honour of his Sword.

WHETHER *Mahomet* or Chriſtian Doctors have more corrupted the Goſpel, is not ſo plain by the light of Scripture, as it

is by that of Experience, that the Later gave Occaſion, Encouragement, and Advantage to the Former. For when by nice and hot diſputes (eſpecially concerning the *Second* and *Third* perſons of the Trinity) the minds of the whole people had been long confounded, and by the then late ſtabliſhment of Image-worſhip the ſcandal was encreaſed, ſo that to Vulgar underſtandings the Doctrine of the Trinity appeared no leſs guilty of Polytheiſm, than that of Image-worſhip did of Idolatry; when by mutual uncharitableneſs either party perſecuted the other both with ſpiritual and temporal weapons; when thus all mens minds were perplexed with doubts, and ſcared with threats, ſo that they knew not What they were to Believe; and thereby ſo diverted from true piety, that they cared not How they Lived; Then was there a temting opportunity offered to the Impoſtor, and he laid hold on it, to ſet up himſelf for a Reformer of ſuch Corruptions, as were both too Groſs to be juſtified, and too Viſible to be denied.

This well conſidered will admoniſh us to turn our complaints from God's Providence, to thoſe ſecond cauſes; which as they provoked our Lord to divorce himſelf from his Churches, ſo did they Encorage and Impower the falſe Prophet to ſeduce and ruin them.

LET us therefor now proceed to compare the Primitive Goſpel with the Modern, not by Retail in Particular Doctrines, (which were a work too great for the Longeſt and Buſieſt life,) but by the Great, in General, whence the Particulars proceeded: For if it appear that our Lords and his Apoſtles teaching were both for Mater and Manner apt to Prevail; but what hath ſince been added, be apt only to Perplex or worſe; then ought we to impute the decay of the Chriſtian religion, not to any defect of God's Providence, bicauſe it doth not change the nature of things; but to thoſe who have perverted the Goſpel.

Let us then well conſider (what is moſt worthy our conſideration) that the Goſpel which our Lord and his Apoſtles preached, in the way wherein they preached it, was ſutable to the meaneſt

meaneſt capacities, and agreeab'l to the *Light of Nature*; Eaſy to be underſtood by the Weakeſt, and worthy to be embraced by the Wiſeſt.

When the Baptiſt ſent two of his Diſciples ſaying *art thou he that ſhould come or do we look for another?* Our Lord gave not his anſwer by one word, Poſitive or Negative, but by ſeveral ſignes, whereby the Baptiſt might ſpell out his mind; and among them he put in *preaching of the Goſpel to the Poor*, equal to his greateſt miracles; and we muſt have very odd conceits of his wiſdom, if he ſuted not his Teaching to the Capacities of his hearers, that the one might be as plain as the other. As he choſe the Poor for his Diſciples, ſo did he afterward for his Apoſtles; and whereas, to prevent the ſcandal that might thence ariſe, he added to their Society a *choſen veſſel*, no leſs eminent in Learning, than They were in Simplicity; This great man of Chriſt profeſſed it both his Duty and his Practice, to imitate That *man of God*, that ſhrunk his full grown limbs, to the little ones of the child, which he was to raiſe to life: That it was his *Duty* he declareth 1. *Cor.* 1. 17. *Chriſt ſent me to preach the Goſpel, not with wiſdom of words:* And that it was his *Practice* Ch. 2. 13. *We ſpeak not the words which mans wiſdom teacheth, but which the holy ghoſt teacheth* πνευματικὰ πνευματικοῖς συγκρίνοντες, ſuiting ſpiritual words to ſpiritual things, and both to ſpiritual perſons.

And upon this account he glorieth 2. *Cor.* 4. 4. *If our Goſpel be hid, it is hid to them that are loſt, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, leſt the light of the glorios Goſpel of Chriſt who is the image of God ſhould ſhine into them.* The light of the Goſpel is like that of the Sun, moſt Powerful, as moſt Beautiful, when moſt Naked; and he had not clouded it with any of his human learning, but preached it with ſuch plainneſs, that if it prevailed not, the fault muſt ly, not in the Obſcurity of his Doctrines, but in the Cataracts which had not only *dimm'd*, but *blinded* the eyes of unbelievers.

But This Plainneſs which He Gloried in, ſome Others Deſpiſed;

ſpiſed; they diſdained this Nakedneſs as Poverty, this Simplicity they derided as Ignorance. The Gnoſtiks boaſted more Knowledge, and rivaled the Apoſtles under pretence of diſcovering greater Myſteries, ſo to draw diſciples from the plain-preaching miniſters of a ſimple Goſpel.

Of theſe Rivals did he no leſs complain, than of all other Perſecutors: and of the Corinthians he was the more jealous, becauſe they were a people rich, idle, and learned: And this he declareth 2. *Cor.* 11. 3. Their City, was for it's pleaſures and plenty, like *Paradiſe*: It's Inhabitants, for liguriſhneſs after knowledge, like *Eve:* the Gnoſtiks, in their inſinuations, like the *Serpent*: and he feared leſt the ſucceſs ſhould continue the parallel; by corrupting their minds from the *ſimplicity which is in Chriſt:* whether he meant Simplicity of Mind, requiſite to a Believer, or ſimplicity of Doctrine to be believed; Either of theſe were a miſchief worthy to be feared: Simplicity of mind is it's beauty, as was *Eve's* Nakedneſs in her innocency: and Simplicity of Doctrine is the glory of the Goſpel, as is the nakedneſs of the Sun in it's brightneſs: He feared leſt they ſhould by the inſinuations of the Gnoſtiks be aſhamed of the Former, and thereby the Later ſhould degenerate from a pleaſant fruitful Garden, to a Boſcage of Fruitleſs Entangling Doctrines. He goeth on, and declareth that the Gnoſtik mode of dreſſing the Goſpel in new doctrines, did not Adorn but Diſguiſe it, ſo as to make it appear quite another thing: *If he that cometh preach another Jeſus whom we have not preached, or ye receive another Spirit which ye have not received, or another Goſpel which ye have not accepted,* (what then?) *you might well bear with Him,* ſaith our tranſlation, without any warrant from the Apoſtle's Words, and in plain defiance to his Deſign; for his diſcourſe plainly diſſwadeth them from it: and therefore whereas the Greek expreſſeth not the Perſon to be born with; Reaſon requireth we ſhould underſtand it, not of the Seducers, but of Himſelf, who impleadeth them: And could we read the words interrogatorily *(could you well bear with him?)* this would render them

them, both more pungent, and more consonant to what he writeth *Gal.* 1. 6. *&c.* It is *Another Gospel*, yet it is *Not Another*: Not another, because the first truths are reteined; yet it is Another, because perverted by Innovations. If there be something preached παρ' ὃ, *Besides* or *Beyond* what himself had preached, the additionals make it Another.

And see to what Height he carrieth the Supposition! and with what Heat he condemneth it! *If we, or an Angel from heaven preach any other gospel than what you have received* (what then? let him be Rejected, or Despised? yea) *let him be Accursed:* Nor thus satisfied, he repeateth it again: *What I have said, that I say again, If* &c. From this zeal of the Apostle thus Denouncing, yea thus Inculcating, so severe a censure, we are invited to observe,

1. *It is possible the Gospel may be so Disguised by innovations, that though it still retein it's genuin principles, yet it may appear Another.*

2. *It is possible such innovations may be so obvious, that the People may discover them.*

3. *Those who depart from such innovators are not schismatiks, but faithful believers.*

4. *Be the Innovators never so high in Authority, we must be so far from paying them Implicit Faith; that we must not pay them ordinary Charity, but hold them Accursed.*

And lest Bishops might think their office called them to such studies, he cautioneth both *Timothy* and *Titus* against them; as no less Foolish than Mischievous. So careful was this great Apostle to arm both Pastors and People against the Gnostiks insinuations. But with what success?

The Serpent's voice prevaileth against all precepts, the People run counter to the Apostle's Warnings, and the Priests to his Example: Those *heap up to themselves teachers, having itching ears*; and These heap up Doctrines to scratch that itch: gently at first, Gratifying their Curiosity; but afterward rudely, Tormenting their Conscience: The peoples hunger in time turned to a Surfeit, and the Priests still cramb'd them with Doctrines which

which they could not ſwallow or digeſt; ſo Many in number, that an ordinary memory cannot retein them, ſo Perplexed in matter, that the beſt underſtanding cannot comprehend them, ſo Impertinent to any good purpoſe, that a good man need not regard them, and ſo Unmentioned in ſcripture, that none but the greateſt ſubtilty can therein diſcover the leaſt intimations of them. No ſentence, hardly any word in the New Teſtament eſcapeth the rack, that they may be forced to confeſs what they never thought of: They are put to many Queſtions, and every Queſtion is ſtretched by many Articles, and every Article vex'd with many Objections, and all this in a New Rude Language unknown to any civil nation.

And to what purpoſe all this? That by the Difficulties and Dryneſs of ſuch a ſtudy, free and generous minds may quit it, Monks engroſs it, and an Infallible Chair be eſtabliſhed, to determin doubts, of no other uſe but to make work for the Oracle.

THAT we may therefore be juſt to our Lord's Providence and Goſpel, we muſt take to our ſelves both the *Warning*, which we have found the Apoſtle gave to the *Corinthians*; and the *Encouragement* which he gave to the *Galatians*: The Former will *admoniſh* us to Retrieve the *Simplicity*, from which mens minds have been ſo Much and ſo Long corrupted: the Later will *imbolden* us to Cenſure thoſe (whoever they be) that have been the Seducers; and that we may not be dazeled by any reverence toward their Characters, we muſt remember that he mounteth them above any ſuppoſition that can reach our caſe.

Had he only ſaid in General (however Comprehenſive) words, that we muſt not be awed by the Greateſt human authority; this (however Ample and Abſolute) would have appeared a Cold encouragement, in compariſon of ſuch an expreſs naming, not only of the greateſt that can be Suppoſed, but greater than can be Imagined.

No King is more independent in his own Dominions from any forrein juriſdiction in matters Civil, than every Chriſtian is within his own Mind in matters of Faith: and none can be

ſo ſecure of any other's Faithfulneſs to his ſoul, as every man may be of his own: the advice therefore which the beſt of Kings gave to the heir of his crowns, doth no leſs concern every one that hath a ſoul to ſave.

Above all (ſaid the incomparable King *Charles* I. in his paper to the Prince) *I would have you, as I hope you are already, well grounded and ſettled in your Religion, the beſt profeſſion whereof I have ever eſteemed that of the Church of* England, *in which you have been educated: yet I would have your own Judgment and Reaſon now ſeal to that ſacred bond which education hath written, that it may be judiciouſly your Own Religion, and not other mens Cuſtoms or Tradition which you profeſs.*

To ſeal to Any bond which education may have written, were to profeſs other mens tradition, which in the Bleſſed Kings judgment is an unworthy baſeneſs: that the Prince might in his Particular worthily do it, was by conſequence on the excellency of the Church wherein he had been educated; which though Happy for Him, is Accidental as to the Generality of mankind. This very advice therefore requireth another ſtep, to examin That very Church wherein we have been educated, that we may not put our ſouls into a Lottery, wherein are many Bad draughts for one Good: for ſo we cannot poſſibly be Judicious in a right choice; and it is great odds, but we ſhall be Unhappy in an evil lot.

The Church of *England* as it Needs not, ſo it Does not, forbid any of it's ſons the uſe of their own eyes: if it did, This alone would be ſufficient reaſon, not only to Diſtruſt, but Condemn it.

Our great care muſt be, that we act no leſs Sincerely than Couragiouſly in this great affair, which we cannot better manage than by theſe neceſſary enquiries.

1. *What was That Goſpel, which our Lord and his Apoſtles preached as neceſſary to be believed?*
2. *What Alterations or Additions have after-ages made in it?*
3. *What Advantage or Damage hath thereupon enſued?*

CHAP. I.

CHAP. I.

Qu. I. *What was that Gospel which our Lord and his Apostles preached as necessary for salvation.*

Τι ἐστι τὸ μανθάνειν; μεταφέρειν τὰς φυσικὰς προλήψεις ἐφαρμόζειν ταῖς καθ' μέρος ἑκάστοις κατὰ φύσιν. *What is Learning or Instruction, but application of Generals to Particulars in a natural way?* saith *Arrian* upon *Epictetus*; laying it as a Fundamental rule whereon we must build, and whereby we must regulate, all our opinions in point of Manners. And it will as well hold in all other arts and sciences: *Euclid* buildeth all his Geometry upon such principles as he calleth στοιχεῖα, because by that A.B.C. he spelleth out all his demonstrations of Propositions and solutions of Problems. And by the same rule must we proceed in the judgment we are to make of the Religion we profess: for thus only shall we gain a Test whereby we may understand what is true Gospel.

That we may be secure in our search for such a Test, we must consult no other but the sacred Oracles, which give us both Character and Account of the Gospel: by the Former we understand the Nature; by the Later, the Number of its Doctrines.

The *Character*, whereby we are to judge of the Nature of the Gospel, is sometime that of a *Covenant*; oftner, that of a *Message*.

1. Sometimes it is set forth as a COVENANT, either to secure us of the Performance on God's part; because if he should violate it, he must break not only a Promise given, but a Covenant stablished; or else in opposition to a *Former Covenant*, which

it is to ſucceed ; and under this Character we find it prophecied of *Jer.* 31.33. which Prophecy is applied *Heb.*8. 8. *Behold, the days come (ſaith the Lord) when I will make a New Covenant with the houſe of Iſrael and the houſe of Judah ; Not according to the Covenant which I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand, to lead them out of the land of Egypt ; becauſe they continued not in my Covenant, and I regarded them not, ſaith the Lord. For this is the Covenant* &c. and more ſuccinctly, *ch.* 10. *v.* 17. *This is the Covenant that I will make with them, after thoſe days ſaith the Lord I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them, and their ſins and iniquities will I remember no more.*

So the New Covenant is oppoſed to the Old. 1. Negatively, *not like the former*, which was no leſs difficult to be Underſtood, than to be Performed ; and 2. Poſitively, the ſame which their own hearts craved, and which were ſo legibly imprinted in the moſt ignorant mind, that every one without any inſtructer might read and underſtand.

It perfected the Old, as in a good *Picture*, the Laſt lively colours do the Firſt dead ones ; which they ſo Deface, as to Juſtify : But the Law of Nature it perfecteth, as a *Building* doth its Foundation, which it ſo leaneth on, as to keep it firm in its place. For whatever Natural religion could ſpeak in behalf of vertue, the Goſpel ſo confirmeth, as to build it higher, with nobler Precepts and richer Promiſes : As therefore as it is a *New Covenant*, it is alſo a Better one, and deſerveth the other and better character. For

2. More Frequently 'tis ſet forth as a *MESSAGE*. This the word literally importeth, and under This title we find it moſt pompouſly proclaimed by St. *John*, in his entry upon his firſt Epiſtle ; wherein having ſtudiouſly recommended it to our confidence by its certainty, and to our appetites by its happineſs, he proceedeth to publiſh its deſign to be no other than the advancement of Primitive, Natural Religion, to a higher perfection : *Theſe things we write to you that you may have fellowſhip* &c. The Patriarchs knew only the Father, but *our fellowſhip*

lowſhip is with the Father and with his Son. As therefore in the face of Jeſus Chriſt we ſee more of the Father's goodneſs, ſo are we thereby obliged to higher ſtrains of love to him and one another, which is the ſumm of Natural Religion.

The ſame in a gayer dreſs we have in the next verſe; *Theſe things we write unto you that your joy may be full.* *Natural Religion* taught men to worſhip God with Feaſts: and by this Argument principally doth *Plutarch* prove the joys of the Religious to be greater than thoſe of the Epicurean; becauſe the one taſteth nothing but the wine and viands, but the other rejoiceth in God, Then and There eſpecially Preſent and Propitious. And by this Argument muſt the *Joy* of a Chriſtian be greater than that of a Philoſopher; becauſe the One can have no other aſſurance of God's propitiouſneſs, but what he can borrow from his Reaſon; whereas the other hath it by Revelation: For in the *new Covenant* above recited, is a promiſe of mercy in forgiveneſs of ſins; and in the Goſpel this is more plainly expreſſed, ſo that our St. *John* maketh it a point of faithfulneſs in God to perform it: And whereas death is the wages of ſin, eternal life muſt be the conſequence of its pardon, which alſo in the Goſpel is expreſly promiſed; ſo what the Philoſophers ſtrongly Wiſhed and faintly Hoped, the Chriſtian is Secure of, and thereby his *joy is Full* in that part where theirs was Thirſty.

Having thus endeared and publiſhed the gracious *Deſign* of his meſſage, he proceedeth to deliver it's joyful *Matter*: *This is the meſſage which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkneſs at all.* A glorious, but a dazeling Word! whereby yet we underſtand this plain truth, that God is moſt perfect, and it is the deſign of the Goſpel to invite us to be ſuch as he is; which alſo St. *Peter* verifyeth ſaying, *For this purpoſe are given us many rich and precious Promiſes, that by them we ſhould be partakers of the divine nature*; than which words none can more clearly declare that the deſigne of the Goſpel, is So to deliver us from the diſcipline of the Ceremonial Law, as to Exalt us to the higheſt Perfection in the Natural, by making

making us *Perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

And if this be the *Deſigne*, this the *Matter* of the Goſpel, then have we an Authentick General Teſt, whereby every Doctrine muſt be tried, that claimeth our entertainment as a Goſpel truth. For every wiſe Agent valueth the Means by their ſerviceableneſs to the End, and Particulars by their ſuitableneſs to the Generals: If to theſe we find any doctrines Serviceable, we muſt Embrace them; if Impertinent, we muſt Slight them; if Pernicious, we muſt Condemn them.

With this Teſt then in our hands as we Safely may, ſo we Boldly ſhall purſue our Enquiries.

The Firſt is, *What was the Goſpel which our Saviour and his Apoſtles preached?*

This Enquiry plainly concerneth matter of Fact, and therefore cannot employ Logick, Metaphyſicks, or any other Scholaſtick Arts, cannot need ſubtilty of judgment, or cunning in diſpute, or any other qualification of mind, but Care and Honeſty: nor again doth it put us to tumble great or many Books, yea or ſo much as one Syſtem; ſaith no more than our Lord did to him that enquired *what he ſhould do to be ſaved?* Our Lord ſent him to his Bible, *what is written in the Law? how readeſt thou?* We have a faithful record of whatever can pretend to be Goſpel, and ſufficient to anſwer the like queſtion, *what ſhall I believe to be ſaved?*

IN its largeſt Edition the Goſpel truly ſo called exceedeth not Two Doctrines: St. *Mark* ſaith, *Our Saviour came into Galilee preaching the Goſpel of the kingdome of God ſaying, the time is fulfilled and the kingdome of God is at hand* REPENT *and* BELIEVE *the Goſpel:* By which if it be not ſufficiently plain, that the Goſpel is compriſed in Repentance and Faith, St. *Paul* putteth it beyond diſpute: For in his farewel diſcourſe with the Elders of the Church of *Epheſus* he thus juſtifieth himſelf. *I have not kept back any thing from you that was profitable for you, but preached unto you* REPENTANCE *toward God and* FAITH *toward our Lord*

Jeſus

Jeſus Chriſt. No words can more expreſly declare that in theſe two are contained, not only all things *Neceſſary*, but all things *Profitable:* And thoſe who ſo importunately call for another catalogue of fundamentals, muſt impeach the Apoſtle either of groſs Ignorance or a groſſer Lye.

Yea, the Holy Ghoſt ſeemeth ſo to ſhun multiplication of neceſſaries, that in other places it thinketh Two too many, and therefore reduceth them to One; and to Either of the two. For in our Lord's firſt Sermon as recited by St. *Matthew* we find no mention of Repentance, but only of Faith: And ſo his laſt Sermon agreeth with his firſt, for therein he profeſſeth this to be the deſign of his death and reſurrection, *that repentance and remiſſion of ſins ſhould be preached in his name among all nations.*

Yet is Faith alſo in its turn honoured with the ſame dignity, as the ſole and adequate ſubſtance of the Goſpel: Our Lord himſelf told *Nicodemus*, that *God ſent him into the world that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh but have everlaſting life.* And St. *John* cloſeth his Goſpel with this ſaying, *Theſe things are written that you may believe that Jeſus is the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in his name.*

So far is our Lord from thinking his Goſpel honoured by multiplication of Articles, that rather than keep up that leaſt of numbers, he is content to diſmiſs either of the two.

That in this he may not appear to contradict himſelf, we muſt conſider, that they are both the ſame under different aſpects, and in their comprehenſive latitude either containeth the other: For to Believe includeth Repentance, as a condition of obtaining that Remiſſion, which without Faith it could not pretend to, nor labour for: And Repentance includeth Faith, becauſe it is performed in confidence of the promiſe, that God for Chriſt's ſake will pardon the penitent.

Becauſe therefore they have their ſeveral aſpects and definitions, upon the diſtinct views whereof, they may be both of them more clearly apprehended, therefore will we handle them as the two tables of the new Covenant, ſo Joined as to be Seve-

ral

ral. When disply'd they appear Two, Faith, and Repentance; when closed, they appear but One; and That side which is next the eye denominateth the whole, sometime Faith, sometime Repentance. Yes! the whole new Covenant is written by our Lord's own finger in these two tables; and the positive Rites which he appointed, thereby to engage us to profess our selves his disciples, are not Parts of his Covenant, but Badges of his Followers, and Acknowledgments of their homage to his Person. Those Rituals we shall not neglect, but first must do justice to the Covenant in its Substance; and we shall endeavour to do it with all possible simplicity, with such plainness as may Instruct every Honest reader, and Convince every Obstinate: Provided they have not so utterly abandoned all their faculties, as to become contradictions to themselves, which they must be, if they want both Courage and Fear; Courage to denounce the Anathema which the Apostle hath commissionated them to cast against the greatest human authority, if it *bring another Gospel*; and Fear to offend against our Lord's command, not to *call any one Master upon earth.*

CHAP. II.

Of FAITH, *In what sence it justifieth?*

WE begin with Faith upon two contrary accounts: 1. Because it is so unhappy, as to be the occasion of the Gnosticism which so much troubled St. *Paul*, by *corrupting* disciples *minds from the simplicity which is in Christ*; and 2. Because it is so happy, as to be honoured by our Lord and his Apostles, as the sole condition for our Salvation. For as St. *Paul* declareth, that we are *justified by Faith without works*; so our Lord (who doubtless knew his own errand) telleth *Nicodemus*, *God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son into it, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish but have everlasting life.*

What

What can be fuller or clearer? The Benefit is proclaimed under a double character, to double its certainty, Negative, *ſhall not periſh*; and Poſitive, *ſhall have everlaſting life*: The Promiſe is Univerſal, to *whoſoever believeth*, and Free from all other condition but believing. If this ſeem incredible, the wonder is cured by another no leſs incredible, *God ſent his only begotten Son into the world* on purpoſe; yet both the one and the other are made credible by the wonderful reaſon aſſigned, *God ſo loved the world*. And now, what need of the impertinent trouble of Repentance? Why ſhould we run the ſmarting gandelope of mortification, croſſing our appetites, and afflicting our ſouls?

Thus do ſome daſh the two tables of the new Covenant againſt each other, and make the Goſpel an enemy to its own great deſign, which we have found to be the advancement of Natural Religion.

The firſt ſervice therefore that we can reaſonably do to Faith, muſt be to reſcue it from ſo great a miſchief, by reconciling our Lord's abſolute Promiſe of *eternal life to whoſoever believeth*, with his no leſs abſolute Threat, that *except we repent we ſhall all periſh*. And this will eaſily be done by theſe two Propoſitions.

1. *All Promiſes, however abſolute in words, muſt be underſtood with implication of all things neceſſary to be ſuppoſed.*

2. *In our Lord's abſolute Promiſe of eternal life to all believers, repentance is neceſſary to be ſuppoſed.*

1. *All Promiſes include a tacit ſuppoſal of all things neceſſary to be ſuppoſed.* It is Impoſſible, at leaſt very Troubleſom, and equally Needleſs, that whoever maketh a promiſe ſhould explicitly reckon up all ſuch conditions, as by their own light are Viſible, and therefore Need not; and by their Multitude Innumerable, and therefore Cannot be particularly expreſſed: Reaſon therefore, and Neceſſity, and the joint Practice of all mankind, have concurred in the rule, that whatever is neceſſary in its own nature to be Suppoſed, is to be taken as neceſſarily Implied; and accordingly in every promiſe are tacitly implied ſuch

Plain, though unmentioned Reſervations.

2. *Repentance and Holineſs of life are neceſſary to be ſuppoſed.* This appeareth both from the nature of the thing, and the expreſs declarations of the author of the promiſe.

From the *Nature of the thing.* The Law of Nature is written in the heart by the hand of God, as a tranſcript of his own nature, and muſt be, like its original, immortal: The Goſpel came not to deface it, but to make it more legible; to new write it upon our Underſtandings, with clearer gloſſes; upon our Reaſon, with brighter arguments; upon our Affections, with nobler motives; upon our Hopes, with higher encouragements; and upon our Beliefs, with Plainer Promiſes. And ſhould our Lord, upon any account whatſoever, promiſe impunity to ſin, this would turn him from a *Saviour* to a *Tempter*: *You ſhall not die*, was the voice of the Serpent; and while the ſons of *Eve* have the ſame licoriſhneſs after forbidden pleaſures, the ſame promiſe (if believed) muſt have the ſame ſucceſs. To promiſe impunity in a pleaſant evil, is to invite to its enjoyment. Far be this from our Lord, who was ſo careful to preſerve us from ſo great a danger, that he did not leave us to the general nature of all promiſes, but clearly and frequently warned us againſt ſuch a miſtake. He openly declared, that ſome would not only plead their Faith, but its Fruits: *Preaching in his name, caſting out Devils*, and *doing many wonderful works*, are plain evidences of true faith; yet even to ſuch, he will ſay, *depart from me, I know you not*, when he knows them too well to own them, becauſe *workers of iniquity*.

And that Repentance may not complain as leſs honoured, he preferreth it to the ſame dignity: for in his laſt Sermon to his Apoſtles, he ſaith no leſs for it than he had done for Faith, *Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Chriſt to ſuffer and to riſe again*, and that *Repentance and remiſſion of ſins ſhould be preached in his name*; but to what purpoſe ſhould repentance be preached in his name, who had promiſed everlaſting life without it?

That we may be the more ſecure of a rule ſo important, let

us

us ſee how its confirmed by an example ſo appoſite, that it looketh more like an illuſtration framed on purpoſe, than a true hiſtory. *Act.* 27.18.

We were in the ſame danger of Eternal death as St. *Paul* and his company were of Temporal, and our deliverance is no leſs like, than was the danger: *Paul* promiſeth, *there ſhall not be loſs of any man's life*; yet when the Mariners would have ſtolen away, he ſaid to the Centurion, *except theſe abide in the ſhip we cannot be ſaved.*

What now can the *Antinomian* plead, which this example doth not anſwer? What difficulty is there in the doctrine of Juſtification by Faith, which it doth not clear? Did Chriſt abſolutely and univerſally promiſe, that *whoſoever believeth in him ſhall not periſh?* So did his Apoſtle abſolutely and univerſally promiſe, that *no man's life ſhould be loſt:* Is Juſtification freely promiſed for *Chriſt's ſake*? ſo was deliverance freely promiſed for *Paul's ſake.* Did God ſend his *Son* to publiſh this promiſe? ſo did he ſend his *Angel* to St. *Paul.* Are our beſt works inſufficient to juſtify us? ſo was the beſt skill of the Mariners to deliver the voyagers. Yet unleſs the Mariners abide in the ſhip, none of the company can eſcape; and unleſs holineſs abide in our lives, we muſt periſh. If therefore any under pretence of caſting anchor upon Chriſt's promiſe, ſteal away from repentance, we muſt have recourſe to our *rule*, as St. *Paul* had to the *Centurion*; and the neceſſity of holineſs will perform the ſame office as the Souldiers did, cut aſunder their pretences, and let their hopes fall off.

In this rule there is nothing doubtful but this, whether it be more Obvious, or Neglected, or Important?

So *Important*, that it will clear all the difficulties which ſwell ſo many volums, with queſtions concerning *Juſtification*, and the *Covenant of grace.* Papiſts will not be able to quarrel with us, when we ſay with St. *Paul*, *By Faith we are juſtified*; nor will the *Antinomians* be able to accuſe us as enemies of *free grace*, when we ſay with St. *James*, *we are juſtified by works.*

It is ſo *Obvious* and ſimple, that it will eaſily avoid the impertinent niceities of Diſputers, whether it be an Aſſent, or Reliance, or Recumbency? whether it juſtify as an Inſtrument, or a Condition? by the Act, or the Habit? Before ſanctification, or After it? *&c.* We no ſooner reconcile St. *Paul* with himſelf, his Abſolute Promiſe of deliverance with his Proteſtation, that without the Mariners ſtay they muſt periſh; but we thence learn how to reconcile him with St. *James*; free Grace, with Conditions required; the Inſufficiency of good works, with their Neceſſity; Juſtification by works, upon account of Natural Religion; with Juſtification by faith, upon account of the Goſpel.

Yet it is ſo *Neglected*, that among thoſe many Treatiſes that have been publiſhed, concerning the *New Covenant* and *Juſtification*, I know not of one that hath honoured it with ſo much as a mention.

Yea, it is worthy our conſideration upon another account; it may ſilence, not only the Antinomian, in his oppoſition to good works, but the Gnoſtick too, in his humor of diſputing. For pray conſider; would it not have been wonderous wiſely done, if in time of ſuch danger, and upon ſuch warning, the ſouldiers, in ſtead of haſting to ſecure the mariners, and their own lives, ſhould have trifled away their precious time in diſputing to which of the two they muſt owe their lives? to the Apoſtle, becauſe God had given them to him; or to the mariners, becauſe he had declared they could not eſcape without them? For God's ſake, let us haſten to put our ſouls out of danger; when that is done, and we are ſafe at land, if we can there find no better employment, nor greater pleaſure, than to play at croſs purpoſes, we may think how to oppoſe, and then to reconcile St. *Paul* and St. *James*.

The caſe (you may ſay) is very unlike: St. *Paul* was a choſen veſſel, and a ſtout champion for the Goſpel; He was *not behind the very chiefeſt of the Apoſtles, but laboured* and ſuffered *more than they all*. This very voyage was but part of a danger, which carried

carried him to a greater for the Goſpel's ſake: And it was but juſt that his Lord, for whoſe ſake he was engaged in the ſtorm, ſhould deliver him from it; and the extent of the favour to all his companions, though in Juſtice it were not due, might very congruouſly be granted in Kindneſs to ſo great a Saint, and under ſuch circumſtances. *But what are the great merits of faith, which may any way entitle it to ſo great a reward as everlaſting life? Whatever can pretend to worth, muſt make its claim good, by ſhewing how it partaketh the nature of God, who is the firſt good: but to be* Credulous, *is ſo far from the power of Divine life, that it is a plain confeſſion of Weakneſs; it is nothing elſe but Leaning upon another, for want of knowledg of its own:* The ſimple believeth every word, but a wiſe man looketh well to his going, *ſaid the wiſeſt of all mere men. And experience telleth us, that Children and Dotards, Women and Fools, the Sick and the Ignorant, are moſt eaſie; and by how much any man is wiſer, by ſo much he is warier, that he be not impoſed upon. Had it any worth, we ſhould have heard of it in* Moſes *or the Prophets; and the Philoſophers would have allowed it a place among the virtues: Whereas on the contrary, Philoſophers reckon Credulity among the vices, and the Old Teſtament mentioneth it but once or twice, and that not by way of Precept but occaſionally. And what reward can it poſſibly diſerve? If I believe, either I do it upon good reaſon, or not; If I ſee good reaſon for my belief, I cannot deſerve Reward, becauſe no man can chuſe, but muſt Neceſſarily believe, as far as Reaſon requires: If I believe without reaſon, then I am a fool, and ſo far from deſerving a Reward, that I deſerve Blame. And if it ſeem hard to juſtify our Lord's Wiſdom, in promiſing ſo great a reward to a performance that deſerveth none at all; it will appear no leſs ſo, to juſtify his Goodneſs, in impoſing ſuch a task no leſs Difficult than Worthleſs: For whereas no ſmall part of the good tidings of the Goſpel, is our manumiſſion from the bondage of* Moſes's *law; the yoke of Chriſt will ſeem the harder of the two. It is eaſier for a rich man to ſacrifice whole Hecatombs, when he hath wealth enough to purchaſe them, than to pull out his eyes; yet can any man eaſier pull out the eye of his Body than his Reaſon, which is not only the*

eye, but the heart; for it is his very Definition, without which he cannot be a Man: It is God's Image, *and the Apoſtle exhorteth us to* put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him. *Now that God ſhould Print his image in our hearts, require us to Renew it; yet promiſe eternal life for reward if we Deface it; is a ſaying harder to be Believed, than all the ceremonies of* Moſes's *law were to be Practiſed.*

This and more is objected againſt Faith in general; and ſtill the more we deſcend to particulars, whether in the Doctrines, that are impoſed as articles of Faith; or in the diſpute between That and Good works; the more will the Objections riſe in force and number. For every one employeth his care againſt the adverſary of his opinion, with neglect of the firſt principles of the Goſpel; and thoſe who plead for juſtification by Faith, have not the gratitude to Juſtify faith it ſelf or its great Author; but leave him as an Arbitrary, Unreaſonable Lawgiver, impoſeing Uſeleſs Worthleſs commands with the weightieſt obligations.

We ſhall therefore endeavour by his grace to perform ſo Neceſſary and Neglected a work; and by the Plaineſt, Simpleſt, General principles of Religion and Reaſon, ſo to aſſert the honour of our Lord and his Goſpel, as to give a fair account both of his Wiſdom and Goodneſs; proving his Goſpel to be no leſs Grateful to our Reaſon, than Gracious to our Salvation; which alſo will be a good healer of our breaches that are made in our minds by Doubts, or in the Church of Chriſt by Diſputes, concerning controverted Doctrines.

For whereas it is acknowledged as a foundation in all ſciences, that we muſt ſeek truth by application of Generals to Particulars; and it is the General ſcope of the Goſpel to advance *Natural Religion*; this is the ſting of the objection, That Faith hath no place among Virtues, but Credulity hath one among Vices: That our defence therefore may both obviate the objection, and build upon a good foundation, it ſhall ſtand upon theſe two pillars.

1. *Faith*

1. *Faith is a duty in Natural Religion, as a cardinal virtue.*
2. *Credulity is not Faith; but as oppoſite to it, as vice is to virtue.*

Both theſe Propoſitions are of Divine authority, recommended by the Apoſtle *Rom.*3.4. in theſe words, *Let God be true, but every man a lyar*; ſo that we can ſay nothing but by way of explication, diſplaying what is wrapt up in thoſe few divine ſyllables: And when we have thence diſcovered what figure Faith made in Natural Religion, we ſhall have gone at leaſt half way in diſcovering what power is given it in the Goſpel.

CHAP III.

What figure FAITH made in Natural Religion?

Faith is a duty in Natural Religion, a Cardinal virtue, Juſtice toward God, to whom it payeth what is due: To his Veracity, let God be true; to his Faithfulneſs, let God be juſt; to his Power, let God be able to perform his Promiſes, *&c.* That this was taught by Natural Religion before *Moſes* brought the Poſitive into the world, and that the Goſpel buildeth upon That foundation; if any one doubt, let him but read the *4th.* chapter of S. *Paul's* Epiſtle to the *Romans*, he will there find *Abraham's* Faith recommended to us for a Pattern, with an explanation of the bleſſing he obtained by it, and who are to be heirs to it: Not the children of his *loins*, but of his *faith*, muſt be heirs; thoſe who *walk in his ſteps*, ſhall reſt in his boſom; and after a deſcription of his heroical faith, the Panegyrick is cloſed with a declaration, *Theſe things are written, not for Abraham's ſake alone, but for ours alſo.*

That we may walk in his ſteps, it will be requiſite we trace them; which if we do, we ſhall find large ſteps on either ſide; Great Confidence in God's Faithfulneſs on one ſide, and great Obe-

Obedience to his Commands on the other; by the one he ſacrificed his Reaſon, by the other his *Iſaac*.

1. *His Confidence* in God's faithfulneſs was ſo firm, that he *ſtaggered not*, but ſtood *ſtrong* in his Belief, and proceeded in his Obedience, notwithſtanding all oppoſite diſcouragements from the laws of Nature, or dictates of Reaſon. It was againſt the courſe of Nature, that he ſhould have a child, when both his own and his *Sara's* bodies were no better than dead, as to power of generation; and more againſt the dictates of Reaſon, that *Iſaac* ſhould be a father after he were ſacrificed: yet did not either the One or the Other ſeem ſo impoſſible, as that God ſhould lie.

He knew him infinite in Wiſdom, Power, and Truth; that he could ſome way or other, undiſcovered to human eyes, perform his Promiſes; and ſince no other appeared, the author of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews* ſuppoſeth he believed, that *God was able to raiſe him from the dead.* And in theſe ſteps of our father *Abraham* the Apoſtle exhorteth us to walk after him; but we muſt do it—*non paſſibus æquis.* For raiſing of the dead was a thing unheard of to *Abraham*; whereas the ſame Son of God, in whom we are to believe, gave us an experiment of it in his own reſurrection; ſo that to *Abraham's* faith and ours may be applied our Lord's words to *Thomas*, we believe after we had ſeen; but Bleſſed *Abraham* had neither ſeen, nor heard, yet believed. Yet if we have the faith but of *Thomas*, it ſhall be imputed to us for righteouſneſs; and the Apoſtle ſo ſpeaketh, as if our Lord ſhewed us his Reſurrection upon That very account: for he ſaith, *Chriſt was delivered for our offences, and raiſed again for our juſtification*; in which words though the ſame particle διὰ be alike uſed in both, yet muſt it be as little the Apoſtle's Meaning as Our Intereſt, that it ſhould import the ſame in both; for he ſo *died for our offences*, as to die in our ſtead; but we cannot deſire, nor could the Apoſtle mean, that he roſe in our ſtead: We rejoice that our offences are taken away by his Death, but

ſhould

ſhould be ſorry to have our Juſtification taken away by his Reſurrection: It is therefore plain that the Particle [*For*] is ſo far from the ſame ſignification in both, that the former is contrary to the later: We are juſtified by his Blood, becauſe thereby our ſins are blotted out; but we are juſtified by his Reſurrection, becauſe thereon our Faith is built: for thereby we are convinced of the truth which we are to believe, and by that belief to be juſtified, as was *Abraham*. So plain it is that the Faith which the Goſpel requireth had its foundation in natural Religion; and while *Abraham* is propoſed as the *father of the Faithful*, Natural Faith is alſo propoſed as the mother of the Evangelical. That in the Law it ſhould never be Commanded, nor ſo much as Recommended more than Once, and that with no higher Eulogy than this, *Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteouſneſs*; nor by any of the Prophets, but once, and that with this ſhort come-off, *the juſt ſhall live by his Faith*; this is no wonder at all: For whoever hath ſo much Religion as to believe there is a God, muſt believe him to be Abſolutely Perfect; which he could not be, if he want either Veracity or Power; and if he be infinite in Both, it muſt be impoſſible for him to lye, or fail of performing his Promiſes.

This therefore needeth neither Revelation for want of Evidence, nor Precept for want of a plain Obligation: and the Old Teſtament muſt have done impertinently if without any need it ſhould have offered the one or the other.

Yet though the Old Teſtament give us no Command, it doth give us Warnings by the puniſhment of Unbelievers. *Sarah*, for her believing husband's ſake, eſcaped with a gentle reprimand, though her Unbelief of the truth of God's meſſenger were aggravated with a double Untruth of her own: for though ſhe laughed at the promiſe of a Son in her old age, and then denied that ſhe did ſo laugh; yet did the Angel reprove her with no other ſharpneſs, but that of reaſon, againſt her double fault. *Is any thing impoſſible with God?* was an argument drawn from

Natural Religion, ſo forceable as to triumph over all natural cauſes, and ſtop the mouth of all other infidelity, but that of the Atheiſt.

But *Lot*'s wife, after ſo manifeſt experience of the power of her gueſts, in delivering themſelves from the force of the whole City, by ſmiting ſmall and great with blindneſs, believed not their threats to deſtroy the ſame City with fire; but turning *back from behind* her believing, flying husband (who's haſt to ſave himſelf, and obedience to the prohibition of the Angels *(ſaying look not behind thee)* hindered him from perceiving it) returning into the curſed City, there periſhed among her wicked neighbours, and became a *pillar of ſalt*, that is, in the Hebrew idiom, *an everlaſting Monument*, of the puniſhment due to unbelievers.

When to a ſtarving City the Prophet of God promiſed a greater plenty the next day, than ever had been known in Any; the incredulous Lord had This puniſhment, that he *ſaw it with his eyes* for the conviction of his Unbelief, but could not taſt it for the ſatisfaction of his Hunger. The unbelieving Iſraelites, who lived upon daily experience of God's power, when they diſtruſted his promiſe of victory over the tall and mighty *Canaanites*, periſhed in the wilderneſs; and thoſe that asked *can God prepare a table in the wilderneſs?* fell under his wrath with the meat in their mouths.

The ſame light which ſheweth us the Being of God, ſheweth alſo his Perfections; and to give an expreſs Law, or uſe any other means to perſwade a Belief in him, had been the ſame wiſdome, as to perſwade me to believe the Sun ſhineth; which were an affront both to the Sun and me.

And thus I hope I have proved that Faith in God is a duty of Natural Religion, a moral Virtue, and to be valued for its intrinſick worth, as a *participation of the divine nature*, in one of God's Attributes, his Juſtice; and we may well proceed to conſider, that beſide this intrinſick worth, whereby it deſerveth to be valued as ſelf-good; it hath another worth, as a Ser-

vice-

victuable means to all other Graces and Duties.

2. *FAITH* is a great promoter of Obedience; and whereas the Old Teſtament ſeemeth ſilent herein, we have a whole and large Chapter in the New, aſcribing all the heroical actions and ſufferings of the Patriarchs to This Grace: and ſo by a kind of poſtliminium aſſerting the right which Natural Religion had, and God might (if he had pleaſed) have by Law required.

And that it may be Proved as clearly as Aſſerted; an argument is offered in the entrance upon the diſcourſe: *by Faith* Enoch *was tranſlated, having received this teſtimony, that he pleaſed God; but without Faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God, for he that cometh to God, muſt believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him;* which argument will receive a little light from the phraſe wherein the teſtimony was given, and whereto the argument referrs. It is ſaid *Gen.* 5. 22. *Enoch walked with God*, and now the Sorites runs thus, He that doth not walk with God cannot pleaſe God, he that doth not come to God cannot walk with God, he that doth not believe that God is and is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him, cannot come to him, nor will he ſeek after him.

After this Argument we have a muſter of many atchievements performed by Faith in the Patriarchs and others, among whom ſtandeth Father *Abraham* like *Saul* among the people, taller by the head; not only than all there preſent, but than all that ever were or ſhall be: For the higheſt Boaſt of St. *John* is, *This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our Faith*: but *Abraham* might boaſt a Victory, not only over the *world*, but over it's *Creator*. For it is ſaid *God tryed Abraham*: he did indeed, for he tried the maſtery with him: he *tried* which could exceed, himſelf in hard Commands, or *Abraham* in abſolute Obedience; and upon trial it appears, that the victory fell to *Abraham*'s Faith, which did not only *Fulfil* his duty, but *Exceed* it; perhaps in the Matter, certainly in the Manner.

1. The *Matter* was such, as he might have Disputed, and perhaps Disobeyed, without sin: He might possibly have pleaded God's *Promise* in bar to his *Command*. God had given him this Son, 'tis true, but with a promise annexed, that this Son, this very Son *Isaac*, should be Father of a numerous and blessed Posterity: And since this depended upon his life; whatever right God might have to his Obedience, himself had a right in God's Promise, which he could not be obliged to renounce. And granting that God's prerogative might over-rule such a plea; This however, cannot be denyed, that Obedience, however unwilling, was the utmost which the command could exact, and therefore

2. The *Manner* of his obedience certainly exceeded his obligation, in the Chearfulness and Diligence of the performance. For 'though *Isaac* were endeared to him by long despair, and then by glorious promises; though he must perish not by an Ordinary or Honourable death, but that, of a Beast; though the tender father must not Hear of this by Messengers, but must Torment his Eyes, yea Imbrue his Hands too in the cruel Butchery; though in so doing, he must offer no less violence to his Reason, than to his *Isaac*; though all this might well have Staggered, yea quite Overthrown both Faith and Obedience; yet is he so far from Staggering, that he doth not only Stand firm to his duty, but Out-goeth it: doth not plead the scandal of so Cruel, so Inhuman, and Unnatural an action, as must make his Person and his Religion stink among his neighbours; doth not intercede for his only Son as for *Sodom* saying *shall not the God of all the world do right?* doth not petition for him as *Moses* did for the people, that God would reverse his sentence, or as *Jephta*'s daughter did for a little time of reprieve; but without the least tergiversation, is equally Diligent and Cautious in the execution; riseth early in the morning, hideth his purpose from his wife lest she should hinder it, taketh with him but two servants, and them he leaveth at such distance, as to prevent the rescue which their officiousness might make of their

their young maſter from the ſeeming madneſs of their old, drileth *Iſaac* himſelf along with pretence that God would provide a Lamb: what could the moſt Tender father do more to Save the life of an only ſon? *Hæc eſt fides* ſaid *Nero*, when his ſervant to ſatisfy his humour killed himſelf; this is ſuch a Faith as might well be *imputed to Abraham for righteouſneſs*, and propoſed to us for a pattern; and ſtop the mouth of all objections which ſhall not think Faith worthy of God's acceptance, or of a place among moral Virtues which are the Graces in Natural Religion.

And as it hath the Worth, ſo it hath the Unhappineſs of a Virtue, beſet on either ſide with a Vice, Defect on one ſide and Exceſs on the other: on the One ſide Infidelity is the Defect, on the Other ſide Credulity is the Exceſs of Faith; and as is uſual with all Virtues, we find it reproached under the name of the Exceſs, whereof it is no wiſe guilty, as we come to conſider in our ſecond Propoſition.

CHAP. IV.

Credulity is not FAITH, *but an oppoſite Vice.*

II. CREDULITY is not Faith, but as oppoſite to it as Vice is to Virtue: as Fool-hardineſs is to Valour, Prodigality to Bounty, and all Exceſs to Prudence, which is the Soul of all Virtue whatever.

We have reduced Faith to Juſtice; becauſe its proper work is to pay God the confidence due to his Veracity. And herein we ſeem to be out of all danger of Exceſs, ſeeing God's faithfulneſs is infinite: and ſo indeed we are, while we make our payment to the Right Object. For to God is due not only Actual belief of every word which we know him to have ſpoken, but an Habitual readineſs to believe any other, whenever it ſhall appear

appear to come from him, and all without reſerve for any contradicting ſence or reaſon.

Our only danger of exceſs therefore lieth in our miſtake, not of the Degree but the Object; and this we incur if we pay That confidence to any creature which is due to God only.

Our excellent *Chillingworth* ſpake no leſs Modeſtly than Rationally, when he ſaid, that he had often demanded of the Romaniſts, why *implicit Faith in our Lord*, might not as well avail for Juſtification, as *implicit Faith in the Church*; but could never receive an anſwer to ſo plain and important a queſtion: It is indeed too much to be Anſwered, but too little to be Demanded; for it ought to be raiſed to a demand, how any Church dare Challenge, or any Perſon dare Pay, that faith to Any, yea to All the creatures in heaven and earth, which is due to God only? This is Injuſtice to God, for two plain Reaſons.

1. It is a kind of ſpiritual Polytheiſm; ſuch a falling down and worſhiping the creature, as muſt provoke Him who declareth himſelf a *jealous God*, that will not give his honour to another: *Let God be true, and every man a lyar*, is a double word of God's own mouth; and he that doth not believe the Later as well as the Former, maketh God a Liar, and man a God.

2. Thoſe who ſo require implicit faith in any other authority, as to contradict Reaſon; give God the lie, by making him contradict himſelf. For Reaſon is no leſs the word of God, than is the Scripture: Yea Therefore, and therefore only, are we to believe whatever we find in Scripture, becauſe we are by plain Reaſon convinced that it is the word of God, whom we muſt believe in defiance to all oppoſition whatſoever. *The ſpirit of a man is the candle of the Lord, ſearching the innermoſt parts of the belly*, ſaith *Solomon*. The ſpirit is that part of our frame, wherein *we are created in knowledge after the image of God*: and in the *fleſhly tables of our hearts* are his words written with the ſame finger, as were his laws in the *tables of ſtone*; and therefore to ſay that this *Candle* contradicted the *Sun of righteouſneſs*, is no leſs injurious to God, than to his image and workmanſhip.

There

There is indeed in the One as in the Other light, great difference of degrees of brightneſs: Some truths appear ſo plain, that the Weakeſt, yea the Soreſt eye, cannot avoid ſeeing and acknowledging them; but ſome are ſo ſmall or ſo remote, that they may deceive or eſcape the Beſt. Yet muſt not This prejudice our beliefe of ſuch great truths, as appear plain both by ſunſhine and candlelight, whereof the later never contradicteth the former.

Abraham's faith is our conſtantly ſerviceable pattern: It ſeemed utterly repugnant to plain reaſon, that *Iſaac* ſhould be a father of nations if he were ſacrificed; but it ſeemed much more ſo, that God ſhould be Unfaithful; and therefore, when *Abraham* believed, he did no leſs juſtice to his own Reaſon, than to God's Faithfulneſs.

To make this (if poſſible) yet plainer, we muſt diſtinguiſh between matter of Faith, and matter of Fact: Matter of Faith, is this only Propoſition, that it is impoſſible God ſhould lie; and to This, *Abraham* ſtood firm, without ſtaggering at the ſeeming oppoſition between the Promiſe and the Command: But that God firſt made ſuch a Promiſe, and then impoſed ſuch a Command, this was matter of Fact; wherein though the Scripture be ſilent, Reaſon is clamorous; ſhewing us, that *Abraham* was by Sufficient (though to us Unrevealed) evidences, no leſs Secure This way, than Confident the Other way. Elſe might he more juſtly be Blamed for diſhonouring God with a thought, that he could be author of ſuch a cruel command; than Juſtified for his confidence in a faithfulneſs, which had been unconcerned.

So there muſt be two Meaſures for our belief: of the one kind is the faithfulneſs of the Perſon, in whom we believe: if God be the perſon, our belief muſt be Infinite, becauſe his Veracity is ſo; if man be the perſon, our belief muſt be Wary, becauſe man is a Liar, or at leaſt may be ſuſpected to be ſo. Of the other kind, is the evidence which we have, that what is offered us for the word of God, is really ſuch: and to this we muſt pay neither

neither More nor Leſs belief, than Reaſon will prove due; provided we be ſtill ready to pay more, as our evidence ſhall increaſe, becauſe our Reaſon for belief will increaſe equally with ſuch evidence. This is all that Juſtice can demand; and whoever payeth more, doth it in his Own wrong, and perhaps in God's too.

A ſad example hereof we have in the Prophet, that by the word of the Lord came from *Juda* to *Bethel*, and to the King's face propheſied the deſtruction of his Altar: he obeyed a Troubleſom and Hazardous Command, refuſed a Royal Invitation, returned homeward another way than that by which he came, and in every thing conformed to his Commiſſion. But when an old Prophet ſaid to him, *I am a Prophet as well as thou art, and an Angel ſpake unto me by the word of the Lord, ſaying, Bring him back with thee into thine houſe, that he may eat bread, and drink water*; the eaſy good man, believing the malicious lying one, was puniſhed, not ſo properly for his Diſobedience, as his Credulity. This being the rule (ſay the Rabbins and Reaſon) that when a Prophet hath received a word immediately from God, he muſt not believe any other than an equally immediate word of God in contradiction to it.

The example jointeth cloſe with the caſe before us. Whatever we hear from clear Reaſon, we hear from a word of God: who ever would perſwade us to disbelieve it, muſt produce ſuch Credentials, as may convince us to the contrary; If he do this, Reaſon immediately tacketh about in conformity to the Evidence, as to another word of the ſame God: but if no other Credentials be offered than his own, or ſome other Humane (that is, Fallible or Fallacious) authority; we are no more to comply with it, than the true Prophet ought to have done with the lying one.

The End perhaps of ſuch Credulous perſons may be leſs diſmal, they may not become the *Lions* prey; but they have already made themſelves the *Aſſes* companions, by ſubmitting their underſtandings to the bridle and ſaddle, impoſed on them

by

by a dull miſtake of Credulity toward man for Faith toward God; more obvious than that of the Fool-hardy Prodigal, or any other overdoer, that by Exceſs vitiateth a Virtue.

BY theſe Plain and Vulgar principles of Morality, we underſtand in Believing as we do in all other actions, what is Virtuous or Vicious; and ſo do we alſo, why ſo Little hath been ſpoken of it by *Moſes* and the Prophets, and ſo Much by Chriſt and his Apoſtles. The ſame Natural Religion which claimed it as due to God, forbad to pay it to any Creature; upon the Former account there was No need of an expreſs precept, and upon the Later there was the Greateſt need; not only of an expreſs Command, but ſuch repeated Importunities, as might outvoice both Reaſon, when it ſhould decry ſuch a demand, and Intereſt, when it ſhould rebell againſt convinced Reaſon; both whereof concurred againſt the belief which our Lord required.

CHAP. V.

Why FAITH *maketh a greater figure under the Goſpel, than it did under the Law?*

FOR our clearer view of the Reaſon why Faith ſhould make ſo much a greater figure in the Goſpel, than it did under the Law, let us parallel *Faith* toward Chriſt, with *Loyalty* towards the King. *Loyalty* is a ſtanding duty, which at all times muſt be paid to the King. In peaceable times, as there is no occaſion for any any proclamation to Require it, ſo there is none to Promiſe it any Reward, but what the laws of government promiſe at all times to good ſubjects, protection in their juſt rights: But if a Prince be dethroned and baniſhed, diſabled to defend his own power and his ſubjects lives; if Loyalty now ſhall expoſe a good ſubject to as great puniſhments, as in good times are the

reward of rebellion; In this case, Policy for his own interests, concurreth with Justice to a good subjects merits, to perswade the Prince, by Publick proclamations and Private messages, and all other possible means, to encourage his subjects with liberal promises, that they may find it their Interest as well as their Duty, to imploy their endeavours in their injured Prince's behalf.

Just thus it is in the present case: Faith is a standing duty to Christ, and must be paid at all times to the end of the world. But at that time when our Lord first claimed it, and St. *Paul* spoke such great things of it, there were extraordinary reasons for the importunities and promises, wherewith it was then honoured, and the world solicited; some whereof in these days, when the Christian religion hath been long established, have lost their influence.

Those extraordinary reasons may be reduced to three. 1. The *Difficulties* of believing. 2. The *Danger* of professing it. 3. The *Necessity* of Both.

1. The *Difficulties* at First were many and great; the Command was Short, but Hard: *You believe in God, believe also in Me. You believe in God*, you cannot avoid so doing, and the very notion of a God exacts it from you: You cannot believe there is a God without believing him to be infinite, as in all other perfections, so in Faithfulness; and this will require on your part Suitable, *i. e.* Infinite Confidence. The same Infinite, Absolute, Implicit belief, which you thus acknowledge due to God, is also due to Me; I am come from heaven to be the light of this lower world in Spiritual things, as the Sun is in Corporal; and what ever I speak, I require you to believe with the same confidence, as you would a particular word from heaven, or a manifest object of sight enlightned by the Sun.

This *at That time* (still I say *at That time*) when our Lord put in such a claim, and his Apostles pleaded for it, appeared a very Hard, because very Unreasonable command, both to Jews and Greeks; it was *to the Jews a Stumbling-block, and to the Greeks* foo-

foolishness; for the Jews required a Sign, and the Greeks sought after Wisdom, and he that would believe, must run counter to the whole world: for so did the Jews object to St. *Paul, We know that this sect is every where spoken against.*

1. *The Greeks sought after Wisdom*, and to Them such a belief seemed Foolishness. Their Wisdom, was Prudence; their Religion, Virtue: The same Religion which taught to pay God infinite belief, taught them also to measure their belief toward Man by the credibility of the Speaker, or the Word by him spoken; and whatever exceeded this measure, was foolishness.

But if Religion were no less concerned than Reason, then must Impiety join with Foolishness; and as it doubled the Vice, so did it the Caveat: for as all change of opinion is difficult, so is that of Religion most so. The world was never possed by any Religion so absurd, but that education and growth gave it such roots, as would not be pluckt up with ease or a little labour; yea, most men have no other reason for their religion but this, which equally prevails for the Worst as the Best. The whimsies of *Mahomet* are no less confidently embraced, and zealously defended and propagated, nor perhaps have they had fewer martyrs or confessors, than the holy doctrines of the Blessed Jesus. The Worshipers of (God's mirror) the Sun, yea of the works of mens hands in wood and stone, are no less tenacious of their Folly, than we are of the Truth: Those who worship what they eat, believe all those damned, who will not pull out their eyes and do the same. Since therefore none could believe in Christ, without renouncing the Religion whereby he was possessed; this alone made it very difficult.

And the very meanness of the Person was a mighty prejudice against so great a claim. This had no part in the trial of *Abraham*'s faith: He was no less sure that he had God's Command for sacrificeing *Isaac*, than that he had his Promise for a blessed posterity from his loins: but here the great difficulty, is the credibility of the Person, commanding and promising such great things; That he could give his followers Eternal Life,

who could not ſave himſelf from the moſt Shameful and Painful Death; that he could give the inheritance of a *Kingdom*, who had not *where to lay his head*; that the Son of a Carpenter was the Son of God; that a Man of Sorrows was the Lord of Glory; theſe appeared ſuch abſurdities to their reaſon, that thoſe who ſought after *wiſdom*, muſt needs find it extremely difficult to ſwallow them.

2. *The Jews required a Sign*, and ſuch a ſign, as might be no leſs too mighty for all thoſe which had been wrought by *Moſes*'s rod, than was his Serpent for thoſe of the *Egyptian* Magicians. The founders of all other religions wheedled the credulous crowd into a belief of their familiarity with ſome God: Thus did *Numa* impoſe upon his *Romans*, and *Mahomet* upon his *Arabians*: But *Moſes* was publickly owned by God in the eyes of the whole people, who for the ſpace of forty years lived upon miracles under his conduct; they ſaw and heard the dreadful thunders and lightnings which promulgated their laws, which they therefore believed muſt be Immortal, becauſe they knew them to be Divine: And can they believe him to come from the ſame God, who profaned the Sabbath which That law had made the cogniſance of his peculiar people?

To this prejudice derived from Religion, add another from Intereſt. They called the Law their Inheritance, and as ſuch they valued it; they look't down upon the גוים the profane reſidue of mankind, as no leſs Inferior to their holy Selves, than Superior to the Beaſts: and that they ſhould be levelled into an equality, how incredible it appeared, we may meaſure from the aſtoniſhment of the great Apoſtle, who ſpeaks of it, as if he were again ſtruck down by a light and voice from heaven. *Eph.* 1.11. *By revelation he made known to me the myſtery* &c. and verſe the 9th. *To make all men ſee what is the fellowſhip of the myſtery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jeſus Chriſt, to the intent that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wiſdom of God according to the eternal purpoſe which he*

pur-

purpoſed in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord. What is This ſo wonderful Myſtery? even this, which cannot be comprehended in one clauſe, that the *Gentiles ſhould be fellow-heirs, and of the ſame body, and partakers of God's promiſes in Chriſt by the Goſpel.* By ſuch amazement of this great Apoſtle, we may judge of his whole nation, and by the aſtoniſhment of him, who would not have believed upon any leſs evidence than a revelation, we may ſafely meaſure the difficulty, which lay upon all thoſe that were trained up in the ſame religion.

Another ſtumbling-block lay quite croſs their way, becauſe croſs to their expectations: They lookt for a Meſſia, that by his Victories ſhould no leſs advance them in Proſperity above all other nations, than *Moſes* by his Law had advanced them in Holineſs: a Meſſia, whoſe Perſon ſhould be Illuſtrious, his Sword Victorious, his Reign Glorious, and *of whoſe Kingdom there ſhould be no end*, either in point of Extent or Duration; Such a Meſſia did their Prophets promiſe, and the time appointed was now fulfilled; their expectations therefore were big, and their longings ardent: And muſt this triumphant Meſſia now dwindle into a vagabond Galilean? muſt their expected triumphs ſink into this diſmal promiſe, *He that will be my diſciple, muſt take up his croſs and follow me*! This was therefore a great ſtumbling-block to the Underſtandings, becauſe it lay croſs to their Intereſts; they were the more Unable, becauſe Unwilling, to believe it; which therefore required a weight of importunities and promiſes, ſufficient to counterballance the double weight of reluctancies. Nor was this the worſt, for

2. The *Danger* was at That time no leſs than the *Difficulty*. I ſay at *That time*, becauſe That circumſtance is highly conſiderable: As it was extraordinary in point of Danger to the Diſciples, ſo did it require ſuch extraordinary promiſes and importunities from our Lord, as might induce them both to combat all Difficulties, and outface all Danger.

In good and peaceable times, when a Prince exerciſeth his power without oppoſition, as there is no Merit in loyalty, ſo is there

there no proclamation of Reward to it. But if he be driven from his throne, and disabled not only to Govern his Subjects, but to Defend Himself; if Loyalty be treated as Rebellion, and to assert the oppressed Prince's right be a forfeiture of life and estate; in such a case, the Prince's interest concurreth with Justice, to perswade him to encourage his good subjects with Promises Extraordinary as his Own Needs, and Their Danger.

Just thus it was in those times when Faith made so great a figure in the Gospel, that it seemed to engross the whole duty of a Christian, and all the promises of Salvation. Had it been sufficient to have believed with a Convinced, yet Silent mind, whatever the Difficulty might have been, the Safety might have equalled it: But this could not be accepted; the mouth must join with the heart, *Ro.* 10. 10. *For with the Heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the Mouth confession is made unto salvation.* *Nicodemus* came to our Lord with the Former without the Later; for coming *by night*, and Privately owning what he was either Ashamed or Afraid Openly to profess, he is told in the Rabbinical stile, that unless by Baptism he make Open Profession of his faith, he cannot be a Christian. *Jo.* 3. To the same sence also did our Lord tell his Apostles, when he commissioned them to preach the Gospel, *He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved*: not simply *he that believeth*, but *he that believeth and is baptized*; so making a Publick Profession of his belief, and himself a Visible Member of Christ's church.

And here those, who upon this account deny infants to be capable of Baptism, because they are uncapable of Belief, may do well to consider the change of times, and of the reason thereon depending. At That time, whoever did not openly profess the New and Persecuted religion, must be supposed to join with the rulers in That religion, which was publickly professed and stablished by the laws of the Land: but now the wind bloweth from the opposit quarter, and since the Gospel is the Stablished religion, and the profession of the very parents maketh great odds against any danger of the contrary, the church may, upon

on ſmall ſecurity from other ſureties, admit any infant for a member.

To which alſo we may add, that our Lord to his promiſe of *everlaſting life* annexed another: *Theſe ſigns ſhall follow them that believe, in my name they ſhall caſt out Devils* &c. The miraculous powers which were Therefore at That time given, becauſe at that time they were neceſſary toward planting the new Goſpel, ceaſed with the need which required them, and for the ſame reaſon did the Method, of belief preceding baptiſm.

At preſent we are not conſidering the Method, but the Deſign of baptiſm: it was an Open Profeſſion of Faith, and therewith an Open Defiance to the world and all its powers: The rulers had no leſs Malice in their hearts, than Power in their hands, againſt all that ſhould profeſs a faith, which muſt aboliſh the law of *Moſes*, which they gloried in, as advancing them to a ſingular holineſs above all other nations, who yet were no leſs enemies to the ſame new religion, which muſt deſtroy their Idols. Our Saviour therefore dealeth plainly and faithfully, *He that will be my diſciple, muſt take up his croſs and follow me: He that hateth not father and mother, yea and his own life alſo, cannot be my diſciple: I ſend you forth as lambs among wolves; ye ſhall be brought before Governors and Kings for my names ſake*, &c.

Such hardſhips were not more contrary to the Appetites of fleſh and blood, than to the Notions they had been educated in, of great Proſperity under the Meſſia: They had dreamed of another kind of *Victory over the world*, than what St. *John* boaſted, ſaying, *this is the victory which overcometh the world, even your Faith*; your faith which overcometh the world by ſuffering all kind of Perſecutions in this life, in aſſurance of glorious Rewards in another.

And in this, the Faith of the Chriſtian outvyeth That of *Abram* himſelf. There was indeed a danger that he might loſe his *Iſaac*, if God could not reſtore him to life when ſacrificed; but he had an experiment of God's power to give him Another ſon, notwithſtanding his old age if he could not reſtore

the

the Same: But to the faithful diſciples of Chriſt there was apparant, not Danger only, but Certainty, of loſs of their *All, children, parents, lands, liberty, yea life it ſelf.*

Bleſſed be the gracious providence of God, that now and for many ages the wind is turned to the contrary point. Our Education maketh it now as Difficult, and our Laws as Dangerous, to Deny Chriſt, as at firſt it was to Confeſs him: and conſequently whatever Extraordinary merit it might derive from thoſe topicks, muſt now be lowerd, and when it ſhall thus be reduced to its Ordinary and permanent worth, it will appear (like Loyalty in peaceable times) a common grace, worthy of no greater than common rewards. For now it's whole ſtock of merit is owing to it's fruits, wherein alſo it falleth ſhort of what it bore in the times of it's planting; for at That time

3: The Neceſſity of Faith was equal to the Difficulty and Danger: And indeed without This, the other two, or either of them would have made the Command unreaſonable.

That Prince would not deſerve to be owned in the Beſt of times, much leſs to be fought for in the Worſt, that ſhould Needleſly impoſe Hard and Dangerous ſervices upon his good Subjects.

To expoſe them to hardſhips and dangers of a neceſſary War, hath alway been juſtified in the beſt Kings; and to encourage their valour with promiſe of ſuitable rewards is equally Juſt and Wiſe: But to expoſe them to fight with Beaſts, only for pleaſure of the ſpectacle, was abhorred by faithful Chriſtians when practiſed by wanton heathen. Let us therefore diſtinguiſh the Times.

1. This Neceſſity of Faith had ſomething ſingular at That time when it was firſt exalted to ſuch Honor. A Great, and Dangerous but Neceſſary, and otherwiſe Unaccompliſhable work muſt be performed. The kingdome of heaven muſt ſubdue all the reſiſting world: God's worſhip muſt be ſtript of all thoſe ceremonies wherewith his own hand had dreſt it, and reduced to ſimple nakedneſs of ſpirit and truth; the partition wall

wall must be broken down which appropriated God's holy people &c. Toward so great a work he came furnished with no other power, but that of working miracles for mens conviction: and should those who were thereby convinced, hide their belief within their own breasts, this might bring some particular Persons, not whole Nations to subjection. It was therefore Necessary to call aloud not only for Belief, but for Profession of it: and since such a Profession at such a Time, must run such a gandelope, between Difficulties and Dangers, it was but reasonable, that the importunities of the Calls, and the price of the Promises, should join with the Necessity of the Performance to outweigh so great Discouragements.

2. Though in such Extraordinary respects the Necessity be now abated, so that every Professor need not be a Preacher or Confessor in the hardest sence; yet there still remains a Permanent necessity, from the influence which Faith Alway (because Naturally) hath upon the believers Actions; and since These must alway be Holy, That must alway be indispensible.

Loyalty is loyalty at All times. In the worst times it will Fight, in the best it will Obey; and when it hath no Occasion, will be ready upon All occasions to approve it self faithful. And Faith is faith at all times. When the world fighteth against it's Lord, it will fight against the world in his cause; it hath the same Valour when it hath not the same occasion to exercise it by suffering, as had the primitive Christians; and it hath ever the faithfulness to fight against all kinds of enemies to his kingdome, Flesh and Blood, and spiritual wickedness, and whatever will not have the Lord rule over it.

The Christian in the most peaceable times is a soldier listed under his Lord's Banner in Baptism: he must follow (when called) the Captain of his salvation that was made perfect by sufferings; and when tempted, he must walk in the steps of of his father *Abraham*, sacrifice his Lusts, though no less dear than was his *Isaac*.

Our Lord therefore is not like some weak Princes, that upon

meer unaccountable Caprice, load their good Subjects with heavy burthens, and advance worthleſs favourites to undeſerved honors; but meaſureth his Laws by his ſubjects Needs. What Natural Religion taught, the Goſpel verifieth, Our Lord himſelf declared that the reaſon of his coming into the world was his father's love to it, And it muſt be a greater myſtery than any he hath required us to believe, if he ſhould ſo Unkindly treat the world which he ſo Dearly loved, as to require them upon pain of eternal death, to believe more than is neceſſary for their ſalvation: for ſhould he require more than is Neceſſary, he muſt do it either for ſome other reaſon, or without any reaſon at all. If we believe him to require faith for any Other reaſon, than becauſe it is neceſſary for our incouragement to Holineſs in order to Happineſs; we diſhonour him, becauſe no other reaſon can be worthy of his Goodneſs or Majeſty: If upon no reaſon at all, we diſhonour him, becauſe this would contradict his Wiſdom, which never acteth without good reaſon.

And now I hope we ſufficiently diſcover why Faith is ſo much exalted in the Goſpel: The reaſons are partly Extraordinary and expired, partly Ordinary and permanent: The Extraordinary derived from the circumſtances wherein the Goſpel was firſt preached: The Ordinary, from it's ſerviceableneſs to the divine life which Natural Religion aimed at, but the Goſpel by means of believing, exalteth with nobler arguments, as will more clearly appear, if we examin the Subject matter which Faith is to believe.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

Of Faith in CHRIST, *as Saviour of the World.*

THAT the great things that are ſpoken of Faith, oblige us to enquire what is neceſſary for us to believe, is too clear to need proof: yet is there nothing leſs Heeded or Underſtood, even by the inquiſitive: and ſo, That Grace who's great worth is derived from it's ſerviceableneſs to our Happineſs, by diſturbing our peace Private and Publick, is made it's greateſt Enemy.

Our preſent work calleth for Enquiries, not Complaints: and therefore adjourning theſe to a more proper time, we ſhall purſue the Enquiry now before us: viz. *What are thoſe ſaving truths, to the belief whereof eternal life is promiſed?*

And here, our former Remark meets us again. Our Lord avoideth Multiplying Articles of Faith, no leſs than Commands: Thoſe were but Two at moſt, *Faith and Repentance*, and Sometimes thoſe Two were reduced to One, and Either one: In the ſame manner doth he treat Faith: Sometimes it's Object is but *One*, and ſometimes *Two*, and ſometimes *Either* of the two; becauſe they are Two in Notion, but Inſeparable in Action.

There are Two kinds of Objects of Belief.

I. The PERSON in whom we Believe.

II. The WORD which we believe upon Credit of the PERSON.

And the Promiſe of eternal life is given, ſometimes to the *One*, ſometimes to the *Other*, ſometimes to *Both* jointly.

1. Sometimes it is given to belief in the *Perſon* of Chriſt; and this more Frequently, becauſe it is the ground whereon the other is built. Thus we find in Our Lord's diſcourſe with *Nicodemus* and *Martha, and the cloſe of St. John's Goſpel.*

2. Sometime it is given to belief of the *Promiſe.* Thus St. *Paul* in his entrance upon that accurate Diatribe concerning the *Reſurrection,* telleth the Corinthians, *This is the Goſpel by which they muſt be ſaved.* And when he pleaded, that *for the hope of the Reſurrection he was called in queſtion,* he ſpake no leſs Truly than Wiſely: becauſe that is the Subſtance of our belief.

3. Sometimes it is given to *Both jointly.* As we found *Rom.* 10. 9. *If thou ſhalt confeſs with thy mouth the Lord Jeſus, and ſhalt believe in thy heart that God hath raiſed him from the dead, thou ſhalt be ſaved.* And the Athenians thought St. *Paul a ſetter forth of ſtrange Gods becauſe he ſpake ſo much of Jeſus and the Reſurrection;* ſuppoſing *Anaſtaſis* to be the Goddeſs to *Jeſus.* Theſe two are ſo nearly Allied, that they cannot be Separated: For whoever believe in Chriſt, as the Son of God, muſt upon his *Credit,* authoriſed by his *Reſurrection,* believe his *Promiſe,* that they ſhall have a Reſurrection Themſelves. Yet nearly as they are Allied, they are not the Same, and therefore require to be treated Severally.

Firſt therefore we ſhall ſpeak of what is firſt in order of nature, *Belief in the Perſon:* and this that we may do the more diſtinctly, we ſhall conſider,

1. *What kind of Perſon our Lord requireth us to believe him to be?*
2. *What is meant by Believing in him?*

I. Concerning the Former, *viz. What kind of Perſon our Lord requireth us to believe him?* We muſt conſider that at That time the world was big with Expectation, and earneſt in Longing for ſuch a *Perſon,* as never bleſſed it ſince it's firſt Creation; a Perſon of whom ſuch glorious things were promiſed, as dazeled their Underſtandings; a Perſon that muſt excel *Moſes* in miracles, *Joſhuah* in victories, *Solomon* in riches and Wiſdom;

All

All *Prophets* in knowledge, and all *Kings* in power: the *Son*, and yet the *Lord* of *David*, who ſhould not only free them from the then galling yoke of the Romans, but ſubdue thoſe Romans, and with them all their Provinces: the time of the promiſed coming of this great Perſon was now fulfilled, and their longings ſharpened to ſo much the greater keenneſs.

This *fulneſs of time* our Lord made the Subject of his firſt Sermon, ſaying *the time is fulfilled and the kingdome of God is at hand:* This was ſo notoriouſly known that it made the Jews obſtinate even to madneſs in defence of their City and Temple againſt the Romans; yea it made ſo much, and ſo loud talk in all the Eaſt, that the noiſe reached to *Rome*, and contributed not a little to *Veſpaſian*'s advancement to the Empire: becauſe (ſaith the Hiſtorian) *percrebuit ſermo*, there was common talk that at That time there would ariſe in the Eaſt a perſon that ſhould govern the world.

Such an one had *Daniel* promiſed *Dan.* 7. 13. *There was given him dominion and glory and a kingdome that All nations and languages ſhould ſerve him:* The title there given him, is no other than the *Son of Man*, which our Saviour oftimes aſſumes to himſelf; which that we may underſtand how much it may import, we muſt conſider, that the Jews had ſome peculiar idioms, whereof two principally did import the eminence of the ſubject ſpoken of.

1. They left That indefinite, which they would imply to exceed any Definition: *God do ſo to me and more alſo*, was a curſe which ſignified more than any expreſſion could define: *Therefore I will do This unto thee and becauſe I will do This unto thee therefore prepare to meet thy God O Iſrael*, ſaid the Prophet; whereby he threatned a Judgment, and required an Attonement *Extraordinary and Unexpreſſible.*

If our title [*Son of man*] ſeem not ſufficiently accounted for by this idiom, and the Prophet *Daniel*'s prophecy; ſome other of his characters will. *Joh.* 8. 24. He ſaith of himſelf, *If you believe not that I am He, you ſhall die in your ſins.* The word *HE* is

ſufficiently indefinit, but the original not having ſo much as That, is much more ſo. The Baptiſt ſent two of his diſciples to enquire if he were ὁ ἐρχόμενος *The comer*, or *He that ſhould come*, and the multitude bleſſed him in the *name of the Lord* under That character. The *Meſſia* is a Great but Indefinit title. Anointing was a compliment of the greateſt kindneſs and honor that could be beſtowed on a gueſt; and from that office in feſtival receptions, it was preferred to a ceremony toward the higheſt dignities. *Prophets*, *Prieſts*, and *Kings* were enſtated by it; and our Lord is thereby charactered, but indefinitely, whether *Prophet*, or *Prieſt*, or *King*, or *All*.

2. Another idiom of advancing any thing or perſon, was by entitling it to *God*; thus *Rivers of God*, *Mountains of God*, &c, were the moſt eminent in their kind: *Man of God* ſignified the moſt excellent Prophet; *Kingdom of God*, the moſt excellent Government; and *the ſon of God*, was by *Daniel* made a character of the greateſt Beauty and Majeſty. For whereas by that phraſe he deſcribed the 4*th* in *Nebuchadnezzar's* furnace, we are not to imagine that he pretended to have ſeen the *ſon of God*, and thereby to know who were like him in Garments or Countenance; but that he uſed that phraſe as the higheſt expreſſion of extraordinary beauty.

Theſe high characters, the *Meſſia* or *Chriſt*, and the *ſon of God*, and the *Comer*, are given our Lord, ſometimes Severally, ſometimes Jointly. St. *Paul* teſtifieth to the Jews, that *This Jeſus that I preach unto you is the Chriſt*; St. *John* profeſſeth, *theſe things are written that you may believe, that Jeſus is the Chriſt, the Son of God*: and *Martha* declareth, *I believe that thou art the Chriſt the Son of God, that ſhould come into the world*. And leſt it might ſeem poſſible that ſome other perſon might be capable of all theſe, however extraordinary eulogies; to exalt him *above every name that may be named*, he ſtileth himſelf, not only the *Son*, but the *Only begotten Son of God*.

The other characters ſpeak an unmeaſurable Excellency, and this laſt a Singular and Incommunicable one: and upon this

Sin-

Singularity of his being *the only begotten Son of God*, expreſſed by his being *anointed before he came into the world*, we ſhall anon find him prefer himſelf above all that were upon leſs accounts called *Gods*.

Theſe and the like high characters ſpeak him a perſon of Supereminent and unmeaſurable greatneſs; a Perſon like (his emblem) the light, ſo glorious, that by our moſt intent view we cannot plainly diſcover any thing of it but this, that we cannot diſcover it. And this is ſo far from hindering the belief which he requireth, that it is the very reaſon why we are obliged to pay it. For as we therefore believe in the light, becauſe the ſame brightneſs which dazeleth our eyes if we fix them directly upon its fountain, plainly ſheweth us every thing that it ſhineth on; ſo our Lord, whoſe Divinity maketh the dignity of his perſon Unintelligible, is for That very reaſon to be believed in with our utmoſt confidence. And thus himſelf expreſſeth

II. *What is meant by believing in his Perſon?* For *Joh.* 12.35. *Jeſus ſaid* unto them, *yet a little while is the light with you, walk while you have the light. —While you have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.* In which words he plainly declareth, that all men are *Travellers*; what the Light is to Travellers, That himſelf is to the world; and therefore what confidence the Traveller hath in the Light, the ſame muſt we have in Him.

Should the Wiſeſt, the Greateſt, yea All the men in the world, or an Angel from heaven, contradict the Light, the Traveller would not abate his belief in it: ſhould any authority whatever tell him, that is a Tree, which the light telleth him is a Stone; ſhould they tell him that is a Path, which the light telleth him is a River; ſhould they perſwade him to go where the light ſheweth a precipice, or that there is no path where the light ſheweth a plain one; he would with a little variation apply to them all, the authentick rule, *Let the light be true, but every man a liar.*

Thus

Thus is it, that we are to believe in *Christ*: for thus *Abraham* believed in *God*, maugre all Difficulties which his affection to *Isaac*, and all the Contradictions which his reason could oppose, the one against his Obedience, the other against his Confidence. And this is our Saviour's claim, *ye believe in God, believe also in Me*, i. e. with the same confidence.

Where the importance is unvaluable, no care can be too great: we shall therefore most carefully and distinctly consider, that the light of the Sun may be lookt upon two ways, either with a Wary eye, diligently but obliquely, observing what it sheweth by its beam; or with a Direct eye, curiously viewing and endeavouring to discover its Features. So our belief in Christ may look upon him under two respects: with respect to the *World*, as its *Saviour*; or with respect to his *Person*, as the *Son of God*.

I. *With respect to the World:* Every one seeth the Sun to be its greatest benefactor, bountifully communicating all the Comforts, yea the very Beings, which every of its inhabitants enjoyeth. And as this bounty is the reason of the Sun's shining, so it is no *Less*, yea it is *More* understood by the Traveller on his Road, than by the Philosopher in his Cell. Thus it is with the *Sun of righteousness*: his title is the *Saviour of the world*, and his Business is to make good his Title. This made him *rise with healing in his wings*, and for This reason he requireth so to be believed in, as the Sun is by the Traveller, who directeth every step by its light.

What ever the Capacity or Opinion of the traveller be; whether he be an illiterare Clown, that thinketh the Sun no bigger than his bushel; or a skilful Astronomer, that can reckon how many hundreds of times he is bigger than the earth; whether he believe the light to be an Accident, or Substance; what ever his thoughts be of the Nature, Magnitude, Distance, *&c.* still the Sun is his faithful guide, whenever he walks by its light.

And that this Practical faith is all that our Saviour requireth, seemeth

ſeemeth plain, as by other evidences, ſo by his own words: For when the Jews came about him, and ſaid unto him, *How long doſt thou make us to doubt? if thou be the Chriſt tell us plainly*; and he in anſwer thereto called God his Father, *they took up ſtones to ſtone him, becauſe* (ſaid they) *thou being a man makeſt thy ſelf God:* he did not, upon ſo preſſing an occaſion aſſert his right, but abating ſo much as exceeded their comprehenſion, ſatisfied Himſelf (that he might ſatisfy Them) with what might be ſufficient for their conviction to ſalvation: *Is it not written in your law* (ſaid he) *I have ſaid you are Gods? If he called them Gods to whom the word of God came, and the Scriptures cannot be broken, ſay ye of him whom the father ſanctified and ſent into the world, thou blaſphemeſt, becauſe I ſaid I am the Son of God?* That he ſpake this in compliance with their Capacity, not their Rage, appeareth, becauſe when they would not be appeaſed, he eſcaped with pleaſure out of their hands, ſince it was ſufficient to their ſalvation, to know How and Why he came into the world, and that (as his Work, ſo alſo) his Perſon was greater than ever had been in it ſince its creation; he ſpeaketh nothing of what he had been from Eternity in Himſelf, but what he was in Relation to the World, and in Compariſon with all Other meſſengers of God to it.

To Them (ſaith he) God ſent his word by their Betters, but it is not ſent To Me by my Betters, but By me to my Inferiors; They were ſent into the world the Common way, and were Afterward ſanctified by receiving God's word; but I was Firſt ſanctified, and Afterward ſent; and if they who were Leſs extraordinary, were honoured with a higher title, being called *Gods*; can it be blaſphemy in me who am their Superior, if I take to my ſelf a Meaner title?

Thus did he (like *Elijah*) contract himſelf to their dimenſions, requiring only Such a Meaſure of Faith as was ſuitable to Their Underſtandings, and his own Deſigns. Were he not greater than *Moſes* and all the Prophets, he could not have competent power to advance ſuch a *Kingdom of God*, as muſt abro-

gate Thoſe laws, which were written by God's own hand. It was therefore neceſſary he ſhould require Such a belief in his Perſon, as might bring the world into ſubjection to his Scepter: Leſs than this cannot ſerve his Ends, and More than this he doth not require.

CHAP. VII.

Of Belief with mere reſpect to the Perſon of Chriſt. Inquiſitiveneſs concerning his Incarnation cenſured: Firſt, becauſe Impertinent.

II. *With mere reſpect to his Perſon*, it is no more neceſſary that we ſhould underſtand what he is, than it is for a traveller to underſtand the features of the Sun. When the great queſtion concerning the Eternity of his Godhead firſt embroiled the world, the Emperor *Conſtantine*, by the moſt eſteemed of his Biſhops ſent to the heads of the contending parties an every way gracious *letter, perſwading each of them to ſilence: wherein we find many ſayings for Quieting the diſpute, more worth than all that ſince hath been written for Deciding it. We ſhall take notice of three.

1. He condemneth it as a *Silly* queſtion, fitter for Fools or Children, than Prieſts or Wiſe men. And this he preſſeth no leſs than eight or nine times. How juſtly, we may diſcover in three particulars.

1. *It is Impertinent to our Lord's deſign.* 2. *It is Fruitleſs to the contemplators own purpoſe.* 3. *It is Dangerous.*

* Euſeb. *vita* Conſtant. *li.* 2. *c.* 67.

I. *It*

I. *It is Impertinent to our Lord's deſign.* For as the Sun doth not ſhine upon the world to Gain to its ſelf a ſmall reflexion of its light from a jewel, or the praiſe of a Philoſopher, or any leſs reaſon, but only to Benefit the world; ſo neither did the *day-ſpring from on high viſit us* for any other reaſon, but to bring *healing in his wings.*

Whoever thinks otherwiſe, muſt Diſhonor him more, and more effectually Deny his divinity, than ever any Heretick did: for he muſt ſuppoſe at leaſt ſome Proportion, between the Breath of Man and the Blood of the Lord.

The Clown may think the Sun no bigger than his buſhel; but whoever hath the leaſt tincture of Aſtronomy, is aſtoniſhed at the vaſt diſproportion, wherein the whole Earth falleth ſhort of any one fixed Star; and when he further conſidereth what innumerable multitudes more are diſcovered by the Teleſcope to his Eye, and beyond That, to his Reaſon; upon conſideration of ſuch a ſtupendous diſproportion between the Earth and ſo many Worlds, both for Greatneſs and Brightneſs; he cannot think ſo highly of its poor inhabitants, as to conceive their great Creator ſhould be ſo greedy of a little of their corrupt breath, as to purchaſe it with ſuch a fall from heaven. Himſelf obſerved to us, that thoſe who *exerciſe authority* among men *are called Benefactors:* could we harbor ſuch baſe thoughts of our Lord, as to degrade him from the dignity of a Benefactor to the meanneſs of a Tradeſman, and that, in the Vileſt ware too, we muſt implicitly deny his Divinity; but to ſuppoſe him ſo Unskilful in his poor trade, as to pay for his Baſe ware, infinitely more than its worth; this muſt caſt no leſs diſhonor upon his Wiſdom than his Majeſty. Yet this we muſt do, if we think he will grant ſalvation upon No other terms, than a belief of the Whole truth concerning the dignity of his Perſon. For this will imply, either that he Came and Suffered on purpoſe to Purchaſe to himſelf the Honour of ſuch a belief, or that he denieth to his faithful ſervants That Benefit, which he came into the world on purpoſe to purchaſe for them.

We may do well a little further to consider, that That part of mankind, which our Lord most favoureth, are most Unable to pay him such a belief. He made it matter of thanks that his Father had *hid the Gospel from the wise and prudent, and revealed it to babes*; and afterward St. *James* observed, that *God had chosen the poor of this world rich in faith:* Yea, when the Baptist sent two of his disciples to our Lord asking, *art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?* our Lord answered him not in One syllable, negative or affirmative, but put him to spell out the truth by signes, among which this was the Last, *to the poor the Gospel is preached*: which as it was a Completion of prophecies, so was it a Signe of the Messia, equal to his *mighty works*. And must the poor who were the first-born of the Gospel, whose Condition our Lord honoured with his Birth, as he did their Persons with his Conversation, who in All Parts of the world First embraced the faith, and in all Ages make the much greatest numbers; must They be excluded from the benefit of Christ's redemption, only because by his providence they are excluded from the Means of understanding the mystery of his Incarnation? They may with their humble Simplicity outdo the Subtilest Schoolmen in Obedience to our Lord's commands, *i e.* they may with Less knowledge produce More and better fruit: and must They perish for want of such a belief, as is morally Impossible for them to acquire, though they desire and endeavour no less to conform their *Belief* to the Doctrines, than their *Practices* to the Commands of their Saviour?

That Such a conceit is no less contrary to the belief of the first Preachers and Believers of the *Gospel*, than it is to the first dictates of *Reason* and *Religion*, no enquirer can be unsatisfied. St. *Paul* finding disciples at *Ephesus* that had *not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost*, but had only been baptized *into John's baptism*, told them no more of Christ but this, that *John indeed baptised with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him that should come after him*, i.e. *on Jesus Christ, when they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord*

Lord Jeſus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghoſt came upon them, and they ſpake with tongues and propheſied. When the *Ethiopian* eunuch believed, that *Jeſus Chriſt is the ſon of God*, of whom *Iſaiah* propheſied.; *Philip* immediately admitted him to baptiſm. At one Sermon three thouſand became diſciples? can any man imagin that they underſtood the whole Myſtery of the Incarnation?

In the next ſucceeding ages, as the Goſpel ſpread farther over the world, ſo did the Curioſity of Doctors improve in explaining its myſtery, and their Zeal in preſſing thoſe Explications upon the belief of diſciples: Yet in *Juſtin Martyr*'s time, though they themſelves believed the Godhead of Chriſt, they did not ſo Impoſe this belief upon All Diſciples, as to deny Them to be Chriſtians, who did not come up to it. This is plain by the words of That father to * *Tryphon* the Jew: *Though* (ſaith he) *I ſhall not prove that Chriſt is God otherwiſe than by proving that This is the Chriſt, and that it was foretold that he ſhould be ſuch; yet it will be juſt that thou ſhouldeſt believe me to be deceived in That one point, and not deny that This is the Chriſt, though he ſeem to be a man born of men, and ſaid to be choſen to be Chriſt: For there are ſome (my friends) among us, who profeſs him to be the Chriſt, and affirm him to be man born of men, with whom indeed I do not agree; nor will many ſpeak ſo, who are of the ſame opinion with me.* By which words it is plain, that however the belief of Chriſt's Godhead was then moſt Generally received, yet were not the Otherwiſe minded excluded from the benefit of his redemption as Unbelievers.

Such was the Faith and ſuch the Charity of the beſt Chriſtians, before Proſperity had made them wanton, and Diſputacity fierce. But now that the queſtion hath coſt ſo much Pains, Contention, and Blood, it hath gotten a new value, not from any new intrinſick Worth, but from the Price which it hath coſt. This is the only reaſon of the value of diamonds, and

---

* *Ad Tryph. Jud.*

This

This queſtion is like them, Coſtly, Hard, and Uſeleſs; and to moſt eyes, as bright too. For it ſeemeth that the Honor due to our Lord's perſon, muſt impart a ſuitable value to every Queſtion wherein it is concerned; and then it will follow, that we cannot Slight this Great one, without ſome Neglect or Contempt of our Lord himſelf.

But on the contrary, tho worth of a *Propoſition* lieth not in its *Matter*, but its *Form*; not in its *Terms*, but their *Connexion*; and if This be unworthy of Thoſe, the Propoſition is ſo far from being the more to be valued for the dignity of its Terms, that it is to be Deſpiſed, and perhaps Condemned, for Debaſing them, by a Poſition unworthy of them. Though it be not Reaſonable, yet its Poſſible, to make a pin of gold; in ſuch a caſe, it will not be an undervalument to the Metal, to ſay that ſuch a pin's point is nothing worth, becauſe it hath very Little of the Metal, and Nothing of Serviceableneſs in it; but we ſhall juſtly cenſure him, that ſhould put that Soft, Noble metal, to an office fit only for a Baſer and Harder one. It is not the Matter, but the Point of this queſtion which is now under conſideration, and we do not Diſregard, but Honour our Lord's perſon, when we cenſure a diſpute which imployeth it in boys-play.

Such was the judgment (we ſee) of the great *Conſtantine*, when the game was firſt ſet on foot; and ſuch afterward was that of *Leonas*, ſent by *Conſtantius*, to moderate in the Council of *Seleucia*, who finding the Biſhops Fierce and endleſs at this *puſhpin*, diſmiſſed them with this juſt reprimend, * *Go, and play the fools at home.*

* *Socrat. lib. 2. cap.* 31.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

It is Fruitleſs toward the Enquirers own Satisfaction.

II. A Second evidence of the folly of ſuch an Enquiry is this, That it is *Fruitleſs* toward the Queſtioniſts own ſatisfaction; This is preſſed by the good Emperor in theſe words, *How few are there that can exactly enough diſcern, or worthily enough expreſs the force of matters ſo weighty and abſtruſe? Or if there be any that believeth he can ſo do, how few are there among the multitude, whom he can enable to underſtand it?* And this is lively repreſented in our Lord's Emblem: The brightneſs of the Sun, which to the Traveller plainly ſheweth his way; but if lookt upon with a fixed and ſteddy view, endeavouring to diſcover the features of his face, will ſhew nothing but the weakneſs of the gazers eyes; which now it will not Inſtruct but Dazle; and the Light of the Goſpel to a faithful believer, ſheweth ſo much of our Lord's Perſon as muſt make us truſt in his Words concerning the way to Salvation; but if we will needs enquire into the *Myſteries* of his *Divinity* and *Incarnation*, we ſhall find our underſtandings no leſs confounded by the brightneſs of the Myſtery, than our eyes are by that of the Sun. And of this the Holy Ghoſt ſeemeth to warn us, not only by a careful Silence concerning our Lord's Genealogy, but by expreſs types and prophecies concerning it's Inſcrutability.

This was ſo known a Character of the Meſſia, that the Jews thence derived an Objection, *We know this man whence he is, but when Chriſt cometh no man knoweth whence he is: He is a Prieſt for ever after the order of Melchiſedec*, of whom it is induſtriouſly obſerved, that he was *without father, without mother, and without deſcent.*

deſcent. Two Evangeliſts trace his (our Lord's) Genealogy: but as they derive it not from his Real, but Suppoſed father; ſo do they take two ſeveral ways, not to Satisfy, but Amuſe us. What is this but to admoniſh us againſt Curioſity? The pedigree of his Fleſh might eaſily have been, either Cleared, or Unmentioned. Had the Evangeliſts been wholly ſilent concerning it, we had leſs wondered: but that they ſhould profeſs to Inſtruct us, yet doubly Diſappoint us; firſt by deriving it from a wrong father, and then by diſtracting us between two ways; what is this, but to verify the prophets deſcription of the Meſſia, *who ſhall declare his generation?* And what doth this ſo careful concealment of his generation according to his Humane nature ſignify more plainly, than a warning againſt ſearching after the eternal generation of his Divinity? If it were Needleſs (and therefore left Impoſſible) to prove him derived from *David*, which was one of his moſt Revealed characters; how can it be otherwiſe, to underſtand That Generation of his, which muſt needs be ſo much the more above our underſtanding, as the Nature of God is above our own?

But licouriſhneſs after forbidden Fruit, is the Original ſin whereof all the Sons of *Eve* are guilty, and the Chriſtian world hath been a great example both of the Sin and the Puniſhment. For as ſoon as the Emperor became a *Nurſing father*, Teaching fathers grew wanton. And the Biſhop of *Alexandria* boldly anſwered the prophets queſtion, *I will declare his generation*; but he did it in ſuch nice manner, that *Arius* a Presbyter cavell'd at it as contradictious: and while either of them was tenacious of his own aſſertion, all the Eaſtern Churches were embroiled with fierce contentions. To quench this fire the good Emperor ſent to the heads of the contending parties his abovementioned letter, which not availing he convened a general Council at *Nice*, of all the Biſhops of the Empire, who juſtified the Biſhop and excommunicated the Presbyter, who Afterward exhibited a confeſſion of his faith to the Emperor, who glad to find it conſonant to the *Nicene*, ſent it to a Council then aſſembled

bled at *Hieruſalem*, That Council approved of it, and ſent their approbatory letters, both to the Emperor and the Biſhop of *Alexandria*, whom thereupon the Emperor required to admit *Arius* to Communion. But the Biſhop anſwered, that *Arius* was excommunicated by a General Council, and may not be reſtored by any leſs Authority. And that the Diſobedience might appear Neceſſary, an important word is found wanting in *Arius*'s confeſſion. And that word is now made matter both of Condemnation againſt *Arius* who omitted it in his confeſſion, and of Diſputes among the Biſhops, who ſubſcribed the *Nicene*.

For thus ſpeaks one of the moſt partial Hiſtorians. *Socr. l. 2. c. 18. As we plainly find by ſeveral Epiſtles which after the Council Biſhops wrote to one another, the word* [Conſubſtantial] *grievouſly troubled ſome of their minds: in fifting whereof while they ſpent much time and pains, and too nicely endeavouring to deſcribe its force, they raiſed among themſelves an inteſtine war, and what they did, differed nothing from fighting in the dark, For they ſeemed not at all to underſtand why they railed at each other.* A hundred and fifty years had this blind diſpute raged, and at laſt was Determined as Blindly as it had been Managed. For the Emperor *Theodoſius*, finding *Conſtantine*'s way unſucceſsful, becauſe the zeal of neither party would admit of Silence or Toleration; took another courſe, by Silencing the One, and Authoriſing the Other: So he forbad all men to contradict what was taught by the Biſhops of *Rome* and *Alexandria*.

Thus was the Knot Cutt which would not be Untyed: Yet are we not even thus Diſentangled. For later ages, diſputing the queſtion in the Schools with leſs Heat, but more Subtility, have determined the queſtion quite otherwiſe than *Athanaſius* had done. For thus ſaith *Athanaſius* in his Dialogue of this Subject. *The divine nature is common to Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, as the human nature is common to Peter, James, and John.* And when the adverſary objects, that then *Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt muſt be Three Gods, as Peter, James, and John are Three men*: He denyeth that *Peter, James and John are Three*

men if they be of one Mind, because then they are one in the Lord: But a Heathen, a Jew, and a Christian, are three men, because of three minds. And with a nearer resemblance he addeth, *the Father, Son, and H. G. are as Bishop, Priest, and Deacon; but Bishop, Priest, and Deacon are ὁμοούσιοι, therefore so are Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.* Athan. *dial de trinit.*

And might not a Heathen at this rate justify Polytheism, provided his Gods disagreed not among themselves? The Schoolmen therefore will not stand to this state of the question, but distinguish between *Person* and *suppositum rationale*; which (yet) they cannot so do as to satisfy themselves, and therefore shelter themselves in their impregnable fort, *Mystery*, and thence thunder upon the adversaries both of This and of another no less beloved *Mystery*: For they make this their cock-argument for *Transubstantiation*; That since the Scripture is no less expres for the *One* than the *Other*, and the Contradictions no less gross in the One than in the Other, therefore we must embrace the one as well as the other.

To this objection of the *Romanists*, and to others of the *Unitaries*, we have found an answer, that we must not infer from our Own Nature to God's; for that Ours is Finite, and God's is Infinite: Three Persons among us are Three Men, because they agree in one Common Nature; but the Divine Nature is not a Common one, but a Singular; and therefore Three Persons do not make Three Gods. If you understand not this, you must not Wonder; or at least, you must not Gainsay it: For it is a *Mystery*, which Reason may not pretend to fathom.

Why, if it be a *Mystery*, and must still be so, to what purpose do we Enquire into it, or Dispute concerning it?

The General that marched his army a whole dark night, and in the morning found himself in the same place whence he marched, would never have so harassed Himself and Them, had he known he should have gotten nothing but sweat and dirt by his pains. And if we know we must at last lie down in the same dissatisfaction, which the very name of a Mystery import-

eth

eth, why ſhould we not do it rather Without toyl than After it? To diſpute concerning a *Myſtery*, and at the ſame time confeſs it a *Myſtery*, is a contradiction as great as any in the greateſt *Myſtery*.

That it was a Myſtery to thoſe very Councilswhich determined it, may appear, not only from the Various confeſſions made by ſeveral councils, (whereof *Socrates* reckoneth no leſs than nine,) or the Contrary determinations of ſeveral counter-councils, (who condemned each others as the Emperors chanced to influence them,) but by the wavering of the very ſame council: For that of *Sirmium* framed two or three, one whereof they would fain have reneged, and laboured all their poſſible to call in all its copies.

Myſteries are ſeldom barren, nor hath this been ſo. This hath not indeed been ſo fruitful as That of Tranſubſtantiation, but it hath brought forth Sufficient, and more than the beſt underſtanding can well maintain. If Reaſon cannot comprehend how there can be three Perſons in the ſame Individual Nature; no more can it, how the ſame Individual Perſon can have Two Natures, and thoſe ſo unequal as the Human and Divine. To avoid this, there can be but two ways imaginable in Reaſon: either Chriſt muſt be Two Perſons, becauſe he hath two ſuch different Natures; or He muſt have but One Nature, becauſe he is but One Perſon: And either of theſe had its advocate.

That *Neſtorius* aſſerted two Perſons in Chriſt, if it appear not by his expreſs words, is inferred from his exception againſt the Bleſſed Virgins eulogy. He ſaid ſhe ought not to be ſtiled *Mother of God*, and This raiſed diſſentions over all the Eaſtern churches, ſo like thoſe that were begotten upon the mother Myſtery, that another hiſtorian deſcribeth them in the very ſame words: *Men fought as in the dark, now one way, and then another; and what they aſſerted they immediately denied.* To determin the diſpute, a Council is called, which condemneth *Neſtorius*; who thereupon was himſelf quiet, but could not make the queſtion ſo.

Eutyches on the other hand aſſerted, that the Divine na-

ture ſwallowed up the Humane; ſo that, however they had been Two Before conjunction, yet Afterward they were but One. This alſo made great ſtirs; a Provincial council at *C.P.* deprived him, then a more general one at *Epheſus* reſtored him and deprived the Biſhop of *C. P.* Then *Leo* Biſhop of *Rome*, whoſe letters had been ſlighted by the council of *Epheſus*, obtains of the Emperor a General Council at *Calcedon*: There *Dioſcorus*, that had been Preſident of the former Council, is accuſed of divers uncanonical proceedings; and that he might be baited as an heretick, the Epiſtle of *Leo* Biſhop of *Rome*, and another of *Cyril*, predeceſſor to *Dioſcorus* in the ſee of *Alexandria*, were read; which done, the Biſhops in council cried out, *This is the faith of the Fathers, This is the faith of the Apoſtles, We All believe ſo, the Orthodox believe ſo, Anathema to them that do do not believe ſo; Peter hath declared ſo by Leo, the Apoſtles taught ſo, Leo piouſly and truly hath taught ſo; This is the faith of Archbiſhop Leo, Pope Leo believeth ſo, Leo and Cyril believe ſo*, &c. And when at the receſs, the queſtion was to be cleared, it was propoſed in this form, *viz. Whether do you agree with Dioſcorus, who ſaith, that Chriſt conſiſteth of two Natures; or with Leo, who ſaith there are two Natures in Chriſt?* they cried, *they believed Leo, and held for Eutychians all that contradicted them.* The very queſtion in its terms was a Myſtery, but the bottom was Clear: *Dioſcorus* had ſlighted the authority of the Biſhop of *Rome*, and the Councils buſineſs was more to advance that See above all Churches, by vindicating its authority againſt *Dioſcorus*, than to aſſert the truth againſt *Eutyches*; and they were jointly provided for in the ſentence, which ſaith, —*Therefore the moſt holy and moſt bleſſed Archbiſhop of the great and ancient Rome Leo, by us and the preſent Council, and the bleſſed and ever to be praiſed Peter, who is the rock and baſe of the Catholick church and foundation of the orthodox faith, hath depriued him* (Dioſcorus) *of all Epiſcopal dignity, and utterly abdicated him from all Sacerdotal miniſtery.* Yet did not ſo Pontifical a ſentence fright the Emperor *Baſiliſcus*, ſo as to hinder him from

writing

writing a circulatory letter, wherein he condemned this deciſion of *Leo*, and all the acts of this council of *Calcedon*, requiring them to be burnt wherever met with: nor any of the Biſhops of *Aſia*, either from ſubſcribing That letter of the Emperor's, or ſending to him Another of their own, wherein they prayed him, *not to ſend any other contrary to it; otherwiſe the world would be overthrown by ſedition, That council of Calcedon having occaſioned infinit bloodſhed.*

After this when the Emperor *Heraclius* endeavoured to perſwade *Catholicus* to believe (as himſelf did) that Chriſt had *two Natures*, and was by him asked, whether he had alſo *two Wills, and two Actions*; puzzeled at ſo ſurpriſing a queſtion, he ſent it to the Patriarch of *C.P.* who anſwered it negatively: but the Biſhop of *Hieruſalem* convened his Suffragans, and demonſtrated, that thoſe who believe but *One Will*, muſt believe but *One Nature*; and then the Emperor publiſhed an Edict, that *men muſt not aſſert either that there is One or Two Wills and Actions in Chriſt.* But his Grandſon called a council which aſſerted *Two Wills*, and anathematized them who aſſerted but *One*.

Yet after this again, the great Emperor *Juſtinian* began to compel the Biſhops to confeſs, *that the body of Chriſt was not capable of any ſuffering or change*; and had not death prevented the accompliſhment of his deſign, he had not only Reſtored the *Eutychian* hereſy, but Outdone it.

Thus have we pointed (and only pointed) at ſome of the Many intangling Queſtions, which puzzeled and divided the ſubtileſt wits of ſeveral ages, and were at laſt decided by no other evidence, but of Imperial and Papal authority; ſufficient to Silence diſputes, but not to Stabliſh truth. And who is he that is not diſcouraged from giving a Confident aſſent to what is this way Obtruded upon his belief; or ſearching into thoſe Myſteries, that have ſo confounded the greateſt clerks? Who can penetrate into ſuch Hypermetaphyſical Niceties, or reconcile ſuch Oppoſit Aſſertions? Who can moderate between the Patrons and Adverſaries of Conſubſtantiality, then between its Patrons,

trons Themſelves, and then again between its Firſt Patrons and the Schoolmen? Between the Orthodox and the Neſtorians, on one ſide, and Eutychians on the other?

We have before proved ſuch a work Needleſs to ſaving Faith, becauſe the Poor, *i. e.* the Greateſt and (perhaps the) Beſt part of the world may be ſaved without it; and now we find it Impoſſible to be accompliſhed by the greateſt Clerks, becauſe the more they Search into it, the more they are Confounded: And if Authority muſt at laſt determine it, what better than that of the Great *Conſtantine* which doth not give Approbation to Either of the ſides, but cenſureth Both, not of Error, but of Folly.

CHAP. IX.

It is Dangerous.

III. A Third evidence of the folly of ſuch an Enquiry is this, that it is *Dangerous*. He that looketh upon the face of the Sun with a fixt eye, loſeth more than his Labour: for he hurteth his Eye; and ſtory ſpeaks of ſome, that quite loſt their ſight by it. *He that pryeth into the Myſtery, will be oppreſſed with the glory*, is a known Aphoriſme; he that boldly aſſerteth any thing concerning it, runneth himſelf upon Danger, ſo much Greater, by how much Higher the Matter of the queſtion is, and by how much Greater the Difficulty is of keeping right, without making a wrong ſtep.

The good Emperor in his abovementioned Letter, gave good warning of this double danger, *we ought to reſtrain our ſelves from talking, leſt when We cannot ſufficiently explain the Queſtion, or our Hearers cannot ſufficiently underſtand our Meaning: either way the people be driven upon a neceſſity of blaſphemy or contention.*

The

The danger is double. First leſt the Height of the Queſtion run us into Blaſphemy ; and then, leſt the Difficulty of it run us into Error: we ſay nothing of the danger of loſing Charity by contention, That being too ſenſibly proved by Experience.

1. There is *danger* of *Blaſphemy*: for though the Queſtion appear Silly upon the two accounts now mentioned, yet is the Deciſion Formidable, becauſe of the concern which our Lord's perſon hath in it. Soon after the Council of *Nice* had determined it, *the Biſhops began to diſagree among themſelves while they too curiouſly examined the word* ὁμοούσιος : *for one ſide thought that thoſe who uſed that word ſpake blaſphemy, as thinking the Son to have no ſubſtance of his own ; and the other ſide accuſed thoſe who thought otherwiſe, and hated them as heathens, becauſe they brought in the worſhip of Many Gods.* On either ſide, the fall is dreadful, and if we be ſo fool-hardy as to adventure our ſelves upon ſo Dangerous a Precipice, what Commiſſion have we to expoſe our Lord's honor, or our Brother's ſoul to the hazard? If the bold enquirer Eſcape the danger of error at Laſt, he is already fallen into a great one, by ſo mean an opinion of our Lord's Perſon, as to think it Comprehenſible.

We ſometimes ſee children in meer ſport and bravery walk on the top of high and narrow walls, and This we allow as pardonable to their green underſtandings; but in a full grown man, we ſhould cenſure the Folly equal to the Danger ; and both the one and the other ſo much greater, by how much the wall were both Higher and Narrower: What then muſt we judge of thoſe, that adventure upon the double danger, of Error from the Abſtruſeneſs of the queſtion, and Blaſphemy from the Height of it? Either party chargeth the other with no leſs than Blaſphemy ; and he that will adventnre himſelf in ſuch a Controverſy, had need of a ſteddy head, and firm footing. But

2. This is a ſecond danger, that we have *no firm ground* to go upon. How Unſound all Topicks are, we need no other evi-

dence

dence but This, that all are Challenged by either party with equal assurance. *Scriptures* the *Arians* capt with the Orthodox. *Antiquity*, they ever claimed with the same confidence. *Councils*, determined sometimes on one side, and sometimes on the other, as the Emperors chanced to influence them. The only advantage of the Catholicks, is long Possession, and That, after Sentence. This may suffice to Silence the adverse side, but hardly to Satisfy either the one or the other, if those historians may be trusted, whose professed Partiality to the prevailing side, hath preserved their works from Time and the Emperor's Edict. They have indeed so handled matters, as to Hide Much, and Varnish All; yet even so, we may pick out enough to justify an appeal, by observing how That Possession was first Obteined, then Continued, and at last Settled.

1. The controversy was *first decided* by the great council of *Nice*, whose Decree therein hath ever been esteemed equal to Scripture, even by those who in other things renèg its authority. Yet in this, rather than any other subject may we wave it, upon a sufficient reason offered us by another Council, which confirmed both That Council of *Nice* and *Arius*'s Confession. For that of *Antioch* in their letters to every city justify themselves in these words, * *We do not follow Arius, but receive him when he cometh to Us; for how can it be said that We who are Bishops, follow Arius who is but a Presbyter?* If this have any sence, it must be of as good force at *Nice* as at *Antioch*: and thereby, we may judge of the Sentence, which first determined the controversy, not by the Merit of the cause, but Interest of the parties.

2. The *Progress* of the controversy was of the same piece. For when *Arius*, after his condemnation, exhibited such a confession of his faith, as satisfied both the Emperor and the Council, then sitting at *Hierusalem*; and came with letters from both, to his Bishop to be restored; his Bishop refused it, say-

* *Socrat. li. 2. c. 7.*

ing,

ing, that it was *not lawful to reſtore one that was excommunicated by the whole Church*; the Emperor angry at the affront, ſendeth his mandatory letter, threatening to deprive him if he diſobeyed: and now the controverſy was tranſplanted, from *Biſhop* againſt *Presbyter*, to *Eccleſiaſtic* authority againſt *Secular*. For though a pretence was found, to cavil at the want of an important word in *Arius*'s confeſſion, yet that this was no better than a mere Pretence, appears, becauſe many who had ſubſcribed the decree of the council of *Nice*, ſeconded the Emperor againſt *Athanaſius*, whom a council at *Tyre* condemned, and the Emperor baniſhed to *Treves*, where he remained during the Emperor's life.

After whoſe death the Emperor *Conſtantine* ſent him back to his Biſhoprick, alledging that his father intended it, had not death prevented him. After the death of this Emperor, *Conſtantius* again baniſhed him, and he fled to the Biſhop of *Rome*, who recommended him to *Conſtans* Emperor of the Weſt, who ſo eſpouſed him and his cauſe, and wrote ſo effectually in his behalf to his brother *Conſtantius*, as to require him upon pain of a war to reſtore him.

Conſtantius for peace's ſake complied, and after the death of both of his brethren, patrons of *Athanaſius*, upon ſentence of a Council at *Antioch*, deprived him; he fleeth again to *Rome*, whoſe Biſhop again embraceth him, not only as a Champion of *Eccleſiaſtical* power againſt *Secular*, but as an opportune occaſion of advancing the *Roman* See above all other *Chriſtian Churches*. For by his Pontifical letters he commanded the Biſhops of the Eaſt, at a day by himſelf named, to ſend their deputies to give him account of their proceedings againſt *Athanaſius* and his party, threatening to deprive them, if they acted any more in ſuch manner. The Eaſtern Biſhops ſcoffed at ſuch his letters, and in a Council at *Sardis* excommunicated him for communicating with thoſe whom themſelves had excommunicated: and the Weſtern Biſhops in requital excommunicated the Eaſtern; ſo from a controverſy between *Eccleſiaſtical* and *Secular* authority,

roſe an immortal Schiſm between the *Weſtern* and *Eaſtern* churches: the later whereof though they agreed in oppoſition to the Uſurpations of the See of *Rome*, yet grievouſly contended among themſelves in That queſtion which was the Mother of all Contentions.

After one hundred and fifty years ſtruggling, the Emperor had this account given him (*a*), That the Weſtern churches were kept quiet, but the Eaſtern were full of tumult. If we examin the Reaſon of the Former part of the aſſertion, and the Truth of the Later, we find, that the *Weſtern Biſhops* were eaſier to be led by the great Biſhop of *Rome*, not only by reaſon of the Greatneſs of his City, but by reaſon of the Smalneſs of their own Underſtandings: which were ſuch, that at the council of *Ariminum*, the greateſt of all for number, they were circumvented by the Subtiler Greeks, and that ſo groſly (ſaith the (*b*) hiſtorian,) that when it was propoſed, whether they would worſhip Chriſt or ὁμοούσιον, they cried they believed not *in homoouſium but Chriſt*. As for the Later part of the aſſertion, the ſame hiſtorian *ca.* 2. ſays, that the *Arians* had all the Eaſtern Churches except that of *Heeruſalem*.

3. The long and miſchievous controverſy was at laſt Settled by *Theodoſius*; who having received his Inſtructions and Baptiſm from a *Conſubſtantialiſt*, required all his ſubjects to conform to *That Religion, which Peter the Prince of the Apoſtles from the beginning had delivered to the Romans, and which at That time Damaſus Biſhop of Rome and Peter Biſhop of Alexandria held: and That church only ſhould be eſteemed Catholick, which worſhiped the divine Trinity with equal honour, and thoſe who held the other, ſhould be called Hereticks, made infamous and puniſhed.*

This we may therefore call *Settling* the controverſy, becauſe thenceforth all ſucceeding Emperors and Biſhops wrot after this copy; and both the parties have ever worn thoſe titles, which the Emperor by his imperial power (as the unqueſtionable foun-

(a) *Sozomen. li.*7 *ca.* 4. (b) *Ruffin. li.* 1. *c.* 21.

tain

tain of honor) was pleaſed to beſtow upon them.

But did not this great Emperor treat his own Edict as he did its enemies? That the living might underſtand what they were to expect, he executed his ſevere ſentence upon the long dead *Arius* and *Macedonius* in Effigie, by Statues repreſenting them in ſhameful poſtures. And can any poſture be more ſhameful than thoſe wherein himſelf now appeareth in an Edict with a Sheeps head and a Dragons tail, Ridiculouſly ſilly before, and Odiouſly terrible behind? What more *Ridiculouſly* ſilly, than to build ſo weighty a Doctrine upon *Implicit Faith* in Two Biſhops, partial to their own Sees, whereof one gave it Birth and the other Maintenance; and a new-coined *Tradition*, which (if known) muſt have prevented the miſerable Convulſions that tormented former ages? And what more *Odious*, than to perſecute as Hereticks and Malefactors, all ſuch as ſhould refuſe to be ſo groſly impoſed upon? Yet were Thoſe Arguments (ſtrengthened as they were with cruel Maſſacre of thouſands at *Theſſalonica*) ſo *Cogent*, as to reduce from *Arianiſm*, the generality of Biſhops, which the force of another ſort of arguments had drawn to That party. Or if the Biſhop yielded not, he weakened his hands during life, and upon his death ſubſtituted ſuch an one as favoured his own opinion; ſo, the length of his reign giving him ſurvivorſhip to all Biſhops, he filled all Churches with ſuch as he called *Catholicks*.

Witneſs the great City of C. P. whoſe Biſhop (*Demophilus*) refuſing the Nicene Faith, the Emperor deprived the *Arians* of the Temples which they had enjoyed forty years; and upon death, ſubſtituted the celebrated *Gregory Nazianzen*; whereupon the famous Temple *Anaſtaſia* received its name, in memory that then the Nicene Faith had a *Reſurrection*: Yet this great Biſhop, though he profeſſed to have ſtudied it Thirteen years without intermiſſion, was ſo modeſt as to call them *Fools*, who too curiouſly diſputed of the *Generation of the Son of God*.

What then was his great Patron? and what are thoſe that build their Confidence on his Authority, and a long Poſſeſſion

thereby first obtained? If by his Edict we cannot be Secured that the Doctrine is *True*, much less can we be thereby *Obliged* to Submit to it, as an *Article of Faith*; whereof the proper Object is not *Human Authority*, but *God's Word*; and its *Measure*, the good *End*, for whose sake our Lord requireth to be *Believed in*.

And certainly, whoever well considereth, that no *Ordinary* man, much more no *Wise and Good* one, will condemn those *Means* as *Insufficient*, which effect the *End*, for which they are prescribed; will find no cause to distrust, but his *Diligence* in his gracious Lord's *Service*, will obtain his *Pardon*, yea his *Acceptance*, for any *Sincere Error*, which may make him fall innocently short of full payment of the Honor due to his *Person*. Yea, he will believe, that to think otherwise, will be more *Unpardonable*, because more *Dishonourable*, both to that Goodness, and that *Faithfulness*, which is the proper object of *Belief*.

For let it be considered; Our Lord's Express words are these, *Jo.* 3. 16. *God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life:* What he means by the word BELIEVE IN HIM, because it is necessary we should understand, he explains *Joh.* 8. 12. *I am the Light of the world*: and more fully *Joh.* 12. 35. *Yet a little while is the* Light *with you*, Walk *while you have the* Light ---- *while you have the* Light BELIEVE *in the Light, that ye may be the children of light:* If any Paraphrase can make the words clearer, it must be such as this. *Your life is a Journey, and you are in Darkness, I come into the world on purpose to bring you the Light which you want: Walk by my Directions, and be Confident that in the end you shall come to the Happiness you travel for.* There are two sorts of Travellers: The *Plain, Honest Clown*, without any curious disquition into the *Nature of Light*, with equal Industry and Confidence, Walketh on his way: The *Curious Astronomer* spendeth much of his Time in calculating, how many times the Sun is bigger than the Earth? how many Semidiameters above it *&c.* and in brawling wth those that will not submit to his Demonstrations.

Which of these two is likely to make the better Journey? is the Question which we have been all this while examining.

Were

Were the *Truth* on one ſide, no leſs *Certain* than the *Aſtronomers Demonſtrations*; and the *Errors* on the other, no leſs *Groſs*, than the *Clowns dull Conceits*; yet will our Lord's proclamation give us greater hopes of the *Sincere Good Man*, that guideth every ſtep by his *Precepts* in Confidence of his *Promiſes*; than of the *Learned Diſputant*, that taketh the Truer ſide in the great queſtion; if he make no better uſe of his knowledge, than to condemn thoſe who want it.

What we have diſcourſed of the Danger of Error, hath no other deſign, than to cool the heat of thoſe Zealots, who will not allow, either *Toleration* in *This* world, or *Salvation* in the *Future*, to an Opinion which ſo many *Wiſe and Good* men as lived within 300 years after Chriſt, were ſo far from believing *Matter of Faith*, that they did not receive it as matter of *Certainty*, nor perhaps of *Credibility*.

Yet do we not juſtify ſuch as on the other ſide with the ſame confidence and fierceneſs, accuſe thoſe of Polytheiſm, who abhor it no leſs than themſelves. If their Poſitions ſeem to infer it, they deny the Conſequence; If this contradict plain Reaſon, they allow no place for Reaſon in matters of Faith; If this make them Hereticks, it muſt be only in Logick, not Religion.

Both parties agree to pay our Lord the whole duty of *Faith*, which conſiſteth in believing him to be infinitly faithful: They differ only in the ſeveral Senſes, wherein they conceive This or That word is to be underſtood. If I then judge my brother, only becauſe His underſtanding differeth from Mine, I judge him, not becauſe he wanteth Faith in God, but becauſe he hath an Other, and perhaps a Better Underſtanding, than I have. This will make it Doubtful, whether I have a right *Underſtanding*, but Certain that I have not true *Charity*.

The ſhort is, we diſpute not againſt the Doctrines contained in the Creed which weareth the name of *Athanaſius*; but againſt thoſe rigid Sentences, which denounce everlaſting deſtruction to thoſe who believe them not: nor againſt Them neither, if they be mollified with ſuch an Interpretation, as every Son of the Church of *England* putteth upon them.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

Of the Word or Matter which is the Object of FAITH.

WE have ſaid enough (have we not ſaid too much?) of what Faith is required to be paid to the PERSON *in Whom* we muſt *Believe:* proceed we now to the WORD or Matter, *Which* we muſt Believe upon the *Credit of the Perſon.*

The Romaniſts from the many diſagreements among the Reformed, infer a neceſſity of ſubmitting our Underſtandings to the Dictates of the Church: We, beſide Recrimination (which is a Plea Sufficient, but not Honourable) anſwer that we diſagree not in matters *Fundamental*! They demand a Catalogue, and did they do it ſincerely, Charity would join with them in requiring a plain and ſatisfactory account! but as long as they profeſs to believe all the Determinations of their Council of *Trent*, as ſo many Articles of Faith; it is plain that any Catalogue which ſhould be offered them, would do them no other ſervice, but to be caſt as a bone of contention among the Reformed, who according to the largeneſs or ſtreightneſs of their minds, would judge More and Fewer Articles Fundamental.

Hardly any Church unfurniſhed with its *Artitles of Religion*; which, that they are not Articles of Faith, but Peace; *Propoſed* as Pious and Probable Doctrines, not *Impoſed* as neceſſary for Salvation; appeareth from the joint Silence of all our Champions, not one undertaking to offer any of them, as an adæquate Catalogue of Fundamentals.

Our excellent Dr. *Hammond*, to ſilence the clamorous with a juſt character of a Fundamental, hath written an expreſs Treatiſe, diſcovering that the word importeth Relation to a *Building*, which is to be thereupon *Superſtructed*: And ſince *Holineſs of life* is the Building, every Doctrine is ſo far *Fundamental*, as it ſupporteth *Holineſs*. This is a Great truth; but how Inſufficient for our Satisfaction, neeedeth

no

no other evidence than the admirable Doctor's own enumeration, which every one will not receive for adequate: It is like an advertiſement in a Gazette, which however exact, cannot ſecure me from miſtake, if I meet the man deſcribed.

We ſhall therefore ſhew, not only the Marks, but the Perſon; not only ſuch Qualifications as are neceſſary to make a truth Worthy to be matter of Faith; but thoſe Individual truths, which our Lord hath expreſly advanced above All their fellows to that dignity.

I. The Qualifications for matter of Faith muſt be principally theſe.

1. It muſt be *Eaſy to be Underſtood by the meaneſt capacity. To the poor the Goſpel was preached,* and by ſuch it muſt be Underſtood, that it may be Believed. Beſide plain Juſtice, which will not reap where it hath not ſown; beſide what we have heard of the Apoſtle's boaſt, that the *light of the Goſpel cannot be hid but to thoſe whoſe eyes* are not only Dimm'd, but quite *Blinded*; and of his jealouſie, leſt the *Corinthians* minds *ſhould be corrupted from the Simplicity which is in Chriſt*; beſide theſe and other evidences, it is worth obſervation, that the ſame Apoſtle in his Epiſtle to the *Romans*, wherein he diſputeth againſt the Jews in behalf of the *righteouſneſs which is by Faith*, as oppoſed to *that which is by the Law*, is careful to prevent any conceit, that the Matter of Faith was more Obſcure than that of the Law: and therefore *ch.* 10. *v.* 6. *&c.* he reciteth the boaſt of *Moſes*, Deut. 30. 12. applying them to Faith in Chriſt: No Height, nor Depth, nor Diſtance of any kind putteth it out of reach; it is not only in our Eye, but in our Mouth: and to put the truth beyond ſuſpicion, in the 9*th verſe*, he giveth us a plain account both of Perſon and Matter; *If thou ſhalt confeſs with thy mouth the Lord Jeſus, and ſhalt believe in thine heart that God hath raiſed him from the dead, thou ſhalt be ſaved; and this* (ſaith he) *is the word of Faith which we preach.* By which and the following words it is plain, that Apoſtle was ſo far from thinking it an

Honor

Honor, that he judged it a great Defect, if there were any Difficulty in Matter of Faith.

It is true, he ſpeaketh with much amazedneſs in his Epiſtle to the *Epheſians* of a great Myſtery, which (yet) though it ſeemed hard to him to be Believed, is eaſy enough to be Underſtood; for it ſignified only this, that the Gentiles were fellow-heirs of the Promiſes with the Jews. And when he inſtructeth *Timothy* how to behave himſelf in the houſe of God, he telleth him of the *great Myſtery of Godlineſs*, which concerneth only the *Perſon* to be believed in, but not the *Matter* to be believed. And in no other word of Scripture do we meet the leaſt intimation of any *boaſt* or *confeſſion*, that Faith hath any hard task for the Underſtanding to perform.

2. It muſt be *an Expreſs word of God:* ſo ſaith the Apoſtle in the *17th* verſe, *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* And ſo ſaith the very Nature of Faith: It is *Juſtice* to God's Veracity, and therefore can have nothing to do, where there is no *Word* to believe.

It muſt not be denied, but Plain Reaſon is another Word of God; and therefore what That inferreth by inconteſtable Conſequence from a written word, muſt be received with a belief equal to the evidence of That Conſequence: But if the relation between the Written word and Rational conſequence be ſo remote, that none but a skilful Herald can derive its pedigree; then is a good Chriſtian no more obliged to believe ſuch an Inference, than is every good Subject to be a good Herald.

That our Lord trebled his command upon St. *Peter*, *to feed his Lambs*, we believe with utmoſt aſſurance, becauſe we find it in the written word, and thence infer that he gave him authority and power to preach the Goſpel, in ſtead of his former employment in Fiſhing, becauſe plain reaſon inferreth, that he could not otherwiſe perform the office of a good Shepherd; but that he thereby commiſſioned, not only St. *Peter* in Perſon, but All his Succeſſors in the See of *Rome*, to rule All Perſons and Nations

Nations, that in All Ages ſhall be of Chriſt's flock, with as *Abſolute* power as a Shepherd doth his ſheep, and that All the flock muſt obey him with the ſame tameneſs, as the ſheep do their ſhepherd; This can therefore be no matter, either of Faith or Reaſon, becauſe the conſequence is beyond the kenn of any eye or teleſcope.

3. Matter of Faith, properly ſo called, muſt not only be expreſly Reveled, but *Expreſly honoured with the Promiſe of eternal life to the believer*. For though All God's words be Equally (becauſe Infinitely) *True*; yet are not All, equally *Goſpel*. That St. *Paul left his cloak behind him*, and wrote to a Biſhop to bring it after him, we believe with as much Confidence, but not with as much Deference, as that *Chriſt died and roſe again*. Our Saviour preached many Moral truths, which (yet) were not properly matters of Chriſtian Faith, becauſe the world was acquainted with them before Chriſt appeared in it. We muſt therefore carefully diſtinguiſh between what is *Written*, and what is *Goſpel*: and that to the *Goſpel* only, and not to any Other Truth, was given the Promiſe, *Mar.* 16.15. *Go ye into all the world, and preach the Goſpel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved; but he that believeth not ſhall be damned.* It is to the Goſpel, and to the Goſpel alone, that this Saving and Damning power is given by our Saviour; and therefore whoever aſcribeth it to any other doctrine, however True, yea however Reveled, maketh himſelf Equal to Chriſt in Authority, and Superior in Faithfulneſs: Equal in Power, by Granting or Denying ſalvation; and Superior in Faithfulneſs, by diſcovering ſome Way to ſalvation, and ſome Danger of Damnation, which our Lord left undiſcovered; and conſequently, leaving every ſincere believer in danger to periſh without fault. For then, whoever doubteth or disbelieveth the additionals, though he believe all that our Lord hath required, (which are no ſmall nor mean part of Chriſtians,) muſt periſh, not for ſtraying from the Faith, but for want of a faithful Shepherd.

And here I cannot but repete my former complaint, That in the midſt of ſuch hot diſputes concerning the very Principles of our Religion, the moſt Obvious and moſt Important remarks are Neglected. In the diſputes concerning *Juſtification by Faith*, we found St. *Paul* might be reconciled with St. *James* in That queſtion; in the ſame manner as with Himſelf, in the Promiſe he had made of every man's eſcape, with the Warning he afterward gave of their danger, if the mariners went off; the one and the other equally accounted for, by a plain rule, that *All promiſes imply whatever is neceſſarily ſuppoſed.* And in the matter now before us, we have Another, and (if poſſible) a Greater blunder of the ſame kind. Nothing can be more *Obvious*, *Important*, or *Neglected*, than this (not Remark for our Reaſon, but) plain *Matter of Fact*; that there are *Some truths offered to our belief* by our Lord and his Apoſtles, *With a Promiſe annexed*, and others Without any ſuch Promiſe; and from This Undeniable and Unavoidable truth, theſe corollaries will force themſelves upon us.

1. *There can be no need of an Interpreter of Scripture, or Determiner of doubts concerning matters of Faith.* For if thoſe words of Scripture, which inform us of what is *Neceſſary to be believed*, be ſo Plain and ſo often Repeated, that no man can miſs their true meaning; then, every man's own Faculties are ſo far Infallible, as to put him out of danger: and if any Other word of Scripture be Doubtful, there is no harm if it remain ſo ſtill: but if any, out of mere love to truth, ſincerely labour to find it out in all its corners; his Endeavors will be Accepted, and his Miſtakes (if he fall into any) will be Pardoned.

2. *The Scriptures cannot be denied to be Sufficient*, though they may have ſuffered the common fate of all long-lived books, by Careleſneſs of copiers, Fraud of hereticks, or Duſt of time.

Many of the Apoſtles writings (doubtleſs) are loſt; but That hindereth not the ſufficiency of thoſe which we enjoy: yea, if all the reſt of the Scripture were loſt, but only thoſe texts, which proclaim thoſe truths, to the belief whereof eternal life is promiſed;

miſed; thoſe Few texts would be Sufficient. Nor doth this ſlacken our obligation to thankfulneſs for the Reſt: For as it is in Temporals, ſo it is in Spirituals; God's bounty is not Meaſured by our bare Neceſſities; he is *Rich towards us*, ſupplying us not only with Neceſſaries, but Conveniences; Not only bread of life to keep us from periſhing, but many other truths to feaſt our curioſities, wherein (yet) as in corporal repaſts, he requireth Sobriety.

3. *We Need not, Ought not to be uncharitable to any who differ from us in other doctrines, to the belief whereof the Promiſe is not appropriate*, eſpecially if they agree with us in thoſe, to which it is ſo. We are ſure, that they are *heirs with us of the ſame Promiſe*; and if we Hate them who Love God, and are by him Beloved; ſuch Uncharitableneſs is both a greater Error and a greater Crime, than their Miſtakes in doubtful things can be.

4. And which is now in our eye, *There can be no need of a catalogue of Fundamentals*, becauſe the Scripture hath particularly enumerated, what truths are neceſſarily to be believed.

Did not our eyes compell us to it, we ſhould hardly think it poſſible, that any who had the leaſt acquaintance with the *N. T.* could eſcape the diſcovery of ſo plain a truth. When we therein find a Doctrine treated like *Mordecai*, with a Proclamation before it, *Bow the knee, Thus it ſhall be done to the truth which the Lord delighteth to honour*; and others left in the ſtreet, among the Vulgar truths of Natural religion; what reaſon can doubt, Which of theſe are Saving truths, and Which Indifferent?

Should *Ahaſuerus*'s officers have ſett up or ſuffered *Any others*, much more ſhould they have ſuffered *Many others*, to have rode in the ſame level cheek by jole with Him, had not this deprived both *Mordecai* of his Honor, and the King of his Obedience? and would not the cavalcade have been ſo much the more criminal, by how much it had been greater? How comes it then to paſs, that Thoſe truths which our Lord hath exalted above all others with the like ſingular honor, ſhould be levelled with others, which are ſo far from any ſuch marks of his fa-

vor, that he hath left them unregarded, and diſputable, whether they be Truths or Errors.

I know no way to unriddle ſo ſtrange a *phænomenon*, but by that common ſaying, *Inter arma ſilent leges.* There hath been ſo much diſputing about Queſtions, that we have not heeded things Unqueſtionable; though That would as certainly bring Peace to our Minds, as the Law would to the State, if they might be paid their due.

Thoſe who are forbidden the uſe of their Bibles, are excuſable; but thoſe who dare Read them, muſt needs think themſelves obliged to *Search the Scriptures, for in them they think they have eternal life, and they are they which teſtify of the Doctrines* which are promiſed it.

The task is every way very Eaſie; it will require very little Pains, and no Art. The meaneſt beggar in the ſtreet underſtood the King's mind concerning *Mordecai*; and ſo may any man that will heed what are thoſe truths which are honoured with a proclamation of eternal life; and beſides, we are more concerned to heed ſuch a proclamation.

We have already obſerved, that the Apoſtle plainly told the Romans, *If thou ſhalt confeſs with thy mouth the Lord Jeſus, and believe with thy heart that God hath raiſed him from the dead, thou ſhalt be ſaved.* Do we in the whole New Teſtament find any other doctrine ſo honoured? We again meet the ſame more pompouſly proclaimed 1 *Cor.* 15. *I declare unto you the Goſpel which I preached unto you, which alſo you have received and wherein you ſtand, by which alſo you are ſaved, if you keep in memory what I preached unto you if you have not believed in vain.* Then cometh the ſame truth with ſomewhat of the ſame pomp, *That Chriſt died for our ſins according to the Scriptures, and that he roſe again according to the Scriptures.*

It will be objected, that This cannot be the Faith which our Lord ſo importunately called for, becauſe this was not performed till after the time of his preaching was paſt: Let us obſerve *Mar.* 16. 14. *He appeared to the eleven as they ſate at meat, and upbraided*

braided them with their unbelief and hardneſs of heart, becauſe they believed not them which had ſeen him after he was riſen: and he ſaid nnto them, Go ye into all the world and preach the Goſpel to every creature, He that believeth and is baptized ſhall be ſaved, but he that believeth not ſhall be damned. The Command coming in the ſame breath with the Reproof, plainly intimateth, that the Goſpel which they muſt preach, was the ſame which themſelves had been ſo backward in believing. However *Lu.*24.46. both his Reſurrection and his Promiſe are made matter of Faith; *For he ſaid unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Chriſt to ſuffer and to riſe again from the dead the third day, and that Repentance and Remiſſion of ſins ſhould be preached in his name among all nations; and ye are witneſſes of theſe things.*

That the Apoſtles took the laſt of theſe words for the ſumm of their Commiſſion, appeareth by what they ſaid and did after the death of *Judas*, Act. 1.21. *Wherefore of theſe men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jeſus went in and out among us,—muſt one be ordained to be a witneſs with us of his reſurrection.* And accordingly throughout the reſt of that book, do we always find them inſiſt upon This, as the main of their buſineſs.

In the former half of theſe words doth our Lord argue it neceſſary, that his Death and Reſurrection ſhould be Foretold and Performed, that Repentance and Remiſſion of ſins might be preached in his name, *i.e.* as by him Promiſed, and by his own Reſurrection ſecured: for the Remiſſion which the Prophets had promiſed reached no further than Temporal puniſhment; but that which Chriſt promiſed reached after death to everlaſting life.

This is plain by the Apoſtle's diſcourſe abovementioned, which as he cloſeth with a triumph over death, *the ſting of death is ſin, and the ſtrengh of ſin is the law, but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, ſo he buildeth the aſſurance of our own victory upon That of Chriſt; *If the dead riſe not, then is Chriſt not raiſed, and if Chriſt be not raiſed your*

Faith

Faith is vain, you are yet in your ſins. If the conſequence be good one way, it is ſo the other: if the Being in our ſins follow from the denial of Chriſt's reſurrection, then muſt Remiſſion of ſins import Reſurrection from death. Both of them depend upon the Relation between Sin and Death. *The ſting of death is ſin*; and again, *the Wages of ſin is Death*; and therefore a Full and Perfect Remiſſion of Sin, cannot but import a Full and Perfect deliverance from Death.

So the ſumm total of the Goſpel, which our Saviour himſelf preached in his life time, and commiſſioned his Apoſtles to preach after his Reſurrection, is this, That thoſe who believe in him, ſhall upon repentance have ſuch a full pardon of ſin, as to be delivered from death. and that Chriſt who hath promiſed this, hath given us an earneſt of it by riſing himſelf from the dead.

There is indeed an under-truth or ſo, which is preſſed upon our belief as Neceſſary. For the Apoſtle telleth the *Galatians*, *If you be circumciſed Chriſt profiteth you nothing, you are fallen from grace, you are debtors to the whole laws.* This I call an Under-truth, becauſe it implieth a belief of benefits promiſed by Chriſt, part whereof was a *New Covenant*, better than That of *Moſes*: This we heard promiſed by the Prophet, and inſiſted on by the writer to the *Hebrews*, as the Character of the Goſpel; but was ſo far from being by our Lord honoured with a Promiſe of eternal life, that the Apoſtles themſelves doubted of it, till the Holy Ghoſt had decided it in Council.

Nor is this an exception to our rule, that it is beyond the power of all the men in the world, yea or of all the angels in heaven, to make any thing an article of Faith, which the holy Scriptures have not made ſo, by annexing to them the Promiſe of eternal life, which therefore we now find to be it ſelf no leſs the *Matter*, than the *Reward* of Faith.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

Of the manner of the Reſurrection, whether in the ſame body or another.

THat a reſurrection from the dead is the proper Matter of the Chriſtian Faith, we have (I hope) ſufficiently proved: but concerning the Manner thereof, it doth not ſo plainly appear what we are to believe. The Apoſtle in that ſolemn Diatribe, that he might leave nothing untoucht, advanceth either a queſtion or an objection in the 35*th* verſe; *But ſome man will ſay, how are the dead raiſed up, and with what body do they come?* If an Objection, it may be thus urg'd: the dead are ſo buried, that it ſeems utterly impoſſible their bodies ſhould be reſtored: Princes many times have their bowels buried at great diſtance from their limbs, ſome whole nations burn their dead, many are drown'd in the ſea, where they are devoured by fiſhes, thoſe fiſhes again by others, which perhaps come to the market and feed other men; and by many other ways are the particles ſo diſpers'd, that it ſeems utterly impoſſible to retrieve them.

If this be objected againſt the truth of the reſurrection, the roughneſs of the Apoſtle's anſwer will be juſt, they are fools in doubting God's omnipotency. All theſe, or what ever other changes any man's body may undergo, are not greater than the chymiſt makes in his Mercury, which yet again he eaſily recalls to his form. He that made all things of nothing, can by the ſame powerful word command every particle to its proper body; nor is he leſs a fool who doubts, whether God will do this if he have promiſed it; becauſe it is poſſible for God to perform ſuch a promiſe, but it is not poſſible he ſhould break it. But if the queſtion be, whether God has promis'd this, ſo that we do not doubt either his power or his veracity, but only our own ap-

apprehenſion of the meaning of his words; this doth not impeach any of God's perfections, but only our own underſtanding: it cannot be injuſtice againſt God, whom in the midſt of ſuch doubts we undoubtingly believe to be infinitely True; but it is juſtice to our own underſtandings, which we do not only Believe but Know to be fallible. If therefore we find the ſame words vulgarly uſed in another ſence, more agreeable to plain Reaſon and God's perfections; Then may we eaſily enquire, Firſt, *Whether any promiſe of God does neceſſarily import a reſtitution of the ſame numerical matter?* if not, then may we proceed to enquire, Secondly, *Whether it be more honourable to God, and more ſerviceable to the deſigns of the Goſpel, that we believe the contrary?*

Firſt, *Whether the word of promiſe neceſſarily import a reſtitution of the ſame numerical matter?* This is fully and clearly anſwered, as ſoon as in common ſpeaking we find the ſame words uſed in a leſs rigid ſence: but if we obſerve how the Apoſtle himſelf hath anſwered this very queſtion, the leaſt that we thence learn, is this, That ſuch a meaning is not matter of Faith, ſince he hath left it Doubtful, and the contrary more Probable: for thus he anſwers, *thou Fool, thou ſoweſt not the body that ſhall be, but God giveth it a body as it pleaſeth him, and to every ſeed its own body*; does not this plainly deny a reſurrection of the ſame numerical particles? thou ſoweſt a little ſingle grain, which when it is corrupted, riſeth in root, ſtalk, blade, ears, and grains, thouſands of times more in matter than was ſowen; God giving the body, and yet to every ſeed its own. What conſequence can thence be clearer than this, That every one may at the reſurrection receive his own body, though it be not the ſame that was buried.

And we may yet further conſider, that this is the conſtant way of nature in all living bodies, which we reckon the ſame while they keep the ſame Forms, though they change every particle of Matter: Grant therefore, that thoſe words of *Job*, *though worms conſume this fleſh, yet with theſe eyes ſhall I ſee God*, ex-

expreſs his confidence of a reſurrection; yet will they ſignify no more than this, That though perſpiration conſume every atom of my fleſh, yet ſhall my eyes be as much the Same, and ſee as Well, as if there were no change in it: and if there be no more required from other topicks, than from the letter of the promiſe, we are at liberty to believe what ſhall ſeem moſt probable. The uſuall arguments are two, firſt from God's Juſtice, and ſecondly from the Serviceableneſs of the belief.

Firſt it is argued, that *that it is juſt, that the ſame body, which was ſharer in the ſin or the ſervice, ſhould alſo be ſharer in the puniſhment or reward.* But if we will ſpeak properly, the body hath no ſhare either in the one, or the other: for Matter neither Acteth nor Perceiveth; but the Soul by the matter. 2 *Cor.* 5. the Apoſtle likens our body to an houſe, and to cloaths; the man Dwells in the one, and Moves in the other; yet neither the one nor the other ſhares life with him: and therefore to argue, That it muſt be the ſame body that ſhall receive puniſhment at the reſurrection, is the ſame as to ſay, the malefactor muſt be executed in the ſame cloaths wherein he committed the crime.

So many years paſt between the injuries which *Joſeph* received from his brethren, and the honors which he received from *Pharaoh*, and thereby his whole body was ſo changed, that his brethren knew him not; and there were yet greater changes both in His and Their bodies, before their Father's death; yet were not their conſciences chang'd, but in their Old age they feared his revenge for the cruelties of their Youth; and if Human juſtice puniſh an old crime, though between the act and the diſcovery every particle of the body be chang'd, becauſe the ſame ſoul makes him the ſame perſon; how can we doubt but Divine juſtice may at the reſurrection do the ſame?

Secondly, *Whether it be more honourable to God, to believe the one or the other*, is the ſame as to ask, Whether it be more honourable to ſalve all his perfections, or to rob one that we may

cloath the other? If we ſo believe, as to magnify God's Veracity in performance of his promiſe, and his Juſtice in diſtributing rewards and puniſhments; will it not more juſtify his Wiſdom, to believe that he will act ſutably to that order of things which himſelf hath eſtabliſhed, than that he will unaccountably exerciſe his omnipotency? It is not (we confeſs) it is not for ſilly men to preſcribe rules for God's wiſdom in its particular acts: but we muſt have a clear and diſtinct definition of the Nature of Wiſdom in general, otherwiſe we pay him but an empty word when we aſcribe That perfection to him, and we might as much honour him by ſaying he is Unwiſe. Now, That definition whereby we underſtand Wiſdom, importeth a choice firſt of a good End, and then of ſuitable Means: if therefore the means be unſuitable, either in Kind or Proportion, That will make a defect in wiſdom. Should we ſee a man yoke a whole plough of Oxen, to draw a weight which a child could carry in one of his hands, we ſhould certainly think him better furniſhed with Cattel than Underſtanding: and to believe that God will by his omnipotency work as many miracles as he ſhall raiſe bodies, when all his Promiſes may be as well verified, and all his good Ends as well promoted in a way leſs miraculous; muſt be no leſs a Diminution of his Wiſdom, than Exaltation of his Power; ſince all that exerciſe of power which tends to no good purpoſe, is vain and impertinent.

Let us then conſider to what purpoſe is the reſurrection promiſ'd, and our belief of it requir'd? The Apoſtle hath proclaim'd two eſpecially: firſt, *that our joy may be full*; and ſecondly, that we may *partake God's nature*.

I. The reſurrection is therefore promiſed *that our joy may be full*: and if we conſider the Strength of Wiſhes, and the Faintneſs of Hopes, which mankind without Chriſt labour'd under; we may thence compute how great a joy the promiſe may bring to a longing mind. The words of *Seneca* in his 102. *Epiſt.* gives us a good hypotypoſis of it: *I took pleaſure to debate upon*

upon the eternity of ſouls, nay more I was fully reſolved therein; for I eaſily believ'd the opinions of great men rather Promiſing than Proving ſo great a matter. I gave my ſelf over to this ſo great hope, and now grow hateful to my ſelf: and now contemn the reliques of my broken years, being ready to be transferred into that immeaſurable time and poſſeſſion of that infinite eternity, when as ſuddenly I was awakened by thy letter, which made me diſmiſs ſo ſweet a dream, which hereafter I will revive and redeem again, as ſoon as I ſhall have ſatisfied thy expectation. Such were the feeble flutterings of the beſt human wiſdom, wanting the Goſpel. The ſtrength of their Wiſhes raiſed them a little towards Hope, but wanting ſupport quickly fell back again to Fear; ſo their Joy was no better than Suſpence, none of the eaſieſt poſtures.

In two reſpects eſpecially was their Joy defective. 1. *Want of Confidence in the Perſons from whom they received the Promiſes*; and 2. *Scantneſs of the Happineſs promiſed.*

1. They had no confident *Belief in the Perſons*, whom the Philoſopher calleth indeed *Great men*, but complaineth that they *Proved* not what they *Promiſed*. They were Great, not by Nature, or Commiſſion, but by Study: had no better Warrant for their promiſes, than what were dictated by partiality to their own Wiſhes, nor the leaſt pretence of Power to make them good. But the author of the Goſpel is a Perſon not only Great, but Infinite; and no leſs ſo in Power, than Faithfulneſs; ſo that there is no place for the leaſt diſtruſt.

2. Another, (and to the preſent purpoſe more conſiderable,) defect of human hopes was in the *Scantneſs of expected happineſs*; it was Immortality indeed, but a Carnal one. They pretended to anſwer *Job*'s complaint, by equalling a dead man's hopes to thoſe of a tree, which ſprings again when it is cutt down; but they had no thoughts of ſuch a Harveſt as the Apoſtle promiſeth. And that the hopes of the Phariſees were no better than thoſe of the Philoſophers, ſeemeth plain from That objection, wherewith the Sadducees pretended to gravel our Saviour: for it cannot be reaſonably imagined, but amidſt ſo

long Converſation, and ſo many Diſputes, as had ſawed that queſtion between them; the Phariſees muſt needs have better informed them, if themſelves had underſtood the difference between the Preſent life and the Future.

And now that our Lord hath ſo plainly revealed that we ſhall be ἰσάγγελοι *equal to the Angels*, that his Apoſtle hath no leſs plainly declared, that our Lord will *change our vile bodies, that they may be like his own Glorious body*, that the Reſurrection ſhall make great and glorious variety of changes, from Natural to Spiritual, from Weak to Powerful, from Corruptible to Incorruptible, *&c*; that we ſhould ſtill be ſo fond of our load of carrion, as to think it a diminution of our happineſs, if we be not again yoked to the ſame dead matter; ſeemeth no leſs a contradiction to the Deſires of Nature, than to the Promiſes of Scripture. This (ſay ſome) will be the joy of the Reſurrection, that the two old friends meet and embrace each other: But a little conſideration will anſwer, that ſuch a meeting would not be of old Friends, but of old Enemies. How can we read the *7th* ch. to the *Romans*, and find there deſcribed the *War between the Fleſh and the Spirit*? how can we hear that ſad cry, *Oh wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death*! yet think it matter of joy to be remanded to it again? Do we not find him often exhorting to *mortify our members which are upon the earth*, and doth he not propoſe himſelf for example, *beating down his body, and keeping it in ſubjection, leſt he ſhould be caſt away*? Or is the Apoſtle ſingular in this notion? Doth not Natural religion agree with the Chriſtian, and Experience with Both, that Virtue is nothing elſe but a War againſt the Body in behalf of the Mind?

Either the ſoul ſhall at the Reſurrection have a remembrance of her late dead body, and the old converſation ſhe had with it, or ſhe ſhall not: If ſhe ſhall not, then there can be no more joy if ſhe meet the ſame Old fleſh, than if all be New: but if ſhe do remember her old Mate, and her old Converſation with it; then muſt ſhe remember all the Contentions ſhe had with

it,

it, all the Wounds ſhe received from it, all the Dangers which ſhe hardly eſcaped by watching againſt it; and it ſeemeth very ſtrange that the Soul at the Reſurrection ſhould find much matter of joy in that Fleſh, as it's greateſt friend, which did it's moſt, and had not Gods goodneſs aſſiſted would have prevailed, to make the Reſurrection it ſelf infinitely miſerable.

However, by our Preſent thoughts let us judge of our Future. Were it putt to our choice whether we would continue in the Same fleſh, however exalted in accidents; or tranſlated into another, which ſhould not have the leaſt Particle the ſame, but ſuch Properties as ſhould equal us with Angels; ſhould we ſo regard our Dead Senceleſs matter, as to make the leaſt difficulty of ſhifting it? ſhould we have ſuch ſtupid fondneſs for our coarſe naſty rags, as in love to them to refuſe robes of glory? Our Matter feels no more than do our cloaths, and our ſouls in ſuch exchange, can feel nothing but exceſs of joy in her new robes: ſo that from This topick will ſpring no neceſſity, that we ſhould believe what we cannot rejoyce in.

II. Another great deſign of the Goſpel, or rather the ſame in another dreſs, is this, That we may *have fellowſhip with God*, which St. *Peter* more plainly paraphraſeth ſaying, *For this reaſon are given to us, great and precious promiſes that by them we may be made partakers of the divine nature.* Since therefore all the force which the Promiſes have towards effecting this good end, is derived from the Joy which ſhall reward them who are invited by ſuch Promiſes to ſuch Godlineſs: If we believe the Promiſes in ſuch a ſence as maketh them moſt Deſireable; we thereby exerciſe ſuch a Faith as is moſt Serviceable to that Adæquate End, for which the Promiſes are Given and Faith required.

And the difference in this reſpect is ſo ſmall between the two opinions, that no conſidering perſon will abate his diligence in God's ſervice, if he believe he ſhall be bleſſed with a Body ſo Glorious, ſo Vigorous, ſo Every way better than this, that he cannot have the leaſt wiſh it ſhould be the ſame.

In

In ſhort therefore, this is not matter of Faith, but Curioſity. That we believe, that the faithful ſhall have a Reſurrection to happineſs greater than they can ask or think; This is therefore matter of Faith, becauſe our Lord himſelf hath made it ſo, declared it to be the very reaſon of his coming into the world, and commanded his Apoſtles to preach it as his Goſpel. This if we ſo believe, as thence to proceed to the Apoſtles moſt Rational and Godly inference, to be *ſtedfaſt and immoveable, alway abounding in the work of the Lord for as much as our labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord*; we have then both *Matter* and *Soul of Faith*, and may ſecurely rely on Gods faithfulneſs to perform his promiſe in the beſt manner.

AND now we have very Amply, and perhaps very Tediouſly, diſſected, That half of the Goſpel, which filleth whole Libraries with books of impertinent ſubtilties. Whatever is diſputed concerning any point of Religion (falſly ſo called) pretendeth to convince us of what we ought to believe in That Particular. But One or Two General Aphoriſms diſcovering Why and How far Belief it ſelf is required, will ſilence all thoſe endleſs (every way endleſs) diſputes. This ſo beneficial and neglected work we have endeavoured to perform by diſſecting the whole Myſtery of the Goſpel.

That it's buſineſs was to reduce the Jews from their bondage under the law of *Moſes*, and the Gentiles from their worſe bondage under the Worſhip of devils, to the ſervice of God by the free directions of their own nature: That to this end he *ſent his only begotten ſon into the world*; teaching them that the beſt ſervice of God conſiſteth in being like him; and for their encouragement therein, promiſing them upon Repentance pardon of ſins paſt, and everlaſting life. And becauſe Thoſe promiſes could no otherwiſe be effectual, Faith muſt neceſſarily be called for, with importunity ſuitable, both to the Difficulties and Dangers which at That time encompaſſed it, and to the Serviceableneſs which at All times accompanieth it.

This

This is the ſumm of the Goſpel: a chain of benefits lett down from Heaven, worthy of God to beſtow, of Angels to admire, and of Man to rejoice in. In this chain, the only link which man can reach is Faith, and its whole worth conſiſts in its connexion with the reſt, and it's eaſineſs to be laid hold on.

And ſince it is incongruous that the Means ſhould be more difficult than the End; it cannot be, that Faith ſhould be more above the reach of an honeſt mind, than the Holineſs which it it is to ſerve.

No; it was firſt preached to the poor, and wherever it came was firſt and beſt entertained by Such: it's one Learned Apoſtle renounced the *words which man's wiſdome teacheth*, and fell into jealouſy leſt his diſciples *minds ſhould be corrupted* with *knowledge falſly ſo called:* and whether he had reaſon will appear by our next Enquiry.

ENQUIRY II.

What changes or additions later ages have made in Matter of Faith?

THis we propoſed as a *ſecond* Enquiry: but it is not ſo properly an ENQUIRY as a Muſter; They are ſo Numerous and ſo Obvious, ſtand ſo thick in our way, and ſo juſtle us on every ſide, that it will not be difficult to Find them, but to Range them into order.

The *General* change, which leadeth all the reſt, is the change of its *Place*. It is unlinked from the *chain* wherein it is ineſtimably ſerviceable; and treated in its *ſingle* ſeparate nature, as if it were ſome precious Diamond, valuable for Brightneſs, Hardneſs, or other irreſpective virtue of its own.

We find our Lord honour it, as the great King did *Daniel* above all his Princes; we hear him declare, that himſelf came into the world to advance it therein, we hear him promiſe it eternal life: we hear both Him and his Apoſtle make it half the Goſpel, we meet it in every page of the New teſtament; and upon ſight of it's ſo great glory, we talk as St. *Peter* did, when confounded at the brightneſs of our Lord's rayment and countenance, *he knew not what he ſaid.*

We conſider not, that two of the reaſons which induced our Lord to call ſo importunately for it, are by his good providence not only expired, but turned to the contrary point, and its now adequate worth is its Serviceableneſs. It may boaſt as did the vine in *Jotham*'s parable, of *chearing God and man*, but it is by its Wine, not by its Timber. By This, it can neither ſupport its own feeble limbs, nor furniſh a pin whereby to faſten them to the

the wall, where they are not worthy to hang but for the fruit's ſake.

Should our Lord require more of it than is ſerviceable, then muſt he require the overplus without reaſon; and this would ſpeak him not a Good and Wiſe, but Humorſom and Capricious Lord: ſo by the ſame proportions as we Exalt the Dignity of Faith above its Uſefulneſs, we muſt Depreſs the Honor of our Saviour.

This therefore is the Mother-error, that whereas Faith is no better than a Retainer to Holineſs, we place it in the Throne as an Independent abſolute Prince. This I ſay is the Mother-error, and is parent of two others: For we think it our duty to ſuch a Prince, to make it as great as poſſible; 1. by *enlargeing its dominions as far*, and 2. by *exalting its prerogative as high* as we can; and ſo we overdo truth in both.

1. *We Extend the empire of Faith as far as poſſible*; not only beyond its Proper bounds, but beyond All bounds whatſoever. *Braſidas*, when asked how far the territories of *Sparta* reached? anſwered, as far as I can caſt my lance; and a Romaniſt, if asked, how far matter of faith is extended? will anſwer, as far as the Pope ſhall declare any thing to be *de fide*. And that this may reach far and wide enough, the Schoolmen have imployed their inventions, to make diſcoveries of ſuch Queſtions, and entangled them with ſuch Objections, as may ſeem Worthy and Neceſſary to be defined. By this art have we gotten a vaſt army of new Doctrines of faith, and the Goſpel, of whoſe Simplicity the greateſt of the Apoſtles gloried, is become a Science of all others moſt perplexed. Our modern Theology hath ſo much more of Metaphyſicks than of the Goſpel, that in defiance to St. *Paul*, who boaſted that the light of the Goſpel was ſo bright, as not to be hid to any but ſuch as had their eyes blinded by the God of this world, we may ſay of it as *Ariſtotle* did of the ſcience into which it is moulded, *it is ſo publiſhed as not to be publiſhed*, ſince there is hardly a word in it, whoſe full meaning is throughly underſtood.

Where the best eye can discover nothing but limpid liquor, the Microscope findeth a multitude of little animals; and where a plain understanding apprehendeth a clear truth, there a disputatious Schoolman findeth a multitude of little doctrines, as useless as those animals: The unhappy difference is, that the microscope pretendeth no more but to spring game for our Curiosity; but the Schools impose their dictates upon our Faith, not only as Worthy to be Known, but Necessary to be Believed.

It is not sufficient for the Bishop of *Rome* to set up for an Oracle; he pretendeth not only to Declare what is True, but to Change the very Nature of Truth, by making That matter of Faith, which before was only matter of Curiosity; and thereby under the title of Vicar of Christ, claimeth a power to destroy the souls for whose salvation Christ died. For whenever a new matter is made *de fide*, it is thereby made destructive to as many as cannot conform their belief to the Pope's judgment. Had it not been disputed, it had not had any need to be so defined; and those who before opposed it upon what they took for good reason, cannot now find That reason the weaker; so the fruit of the decision is only This, That the belief which before was Innocent, is now become Damnable.

They seem indeed to make ample amends, by the implicit faith which they say will avail for the common people, to whom it shall be sufficient to believe as the church believeth, though they neither Understand, nor so much as Hear of any article of faith, which by this salvo are so far from being Multiplied, that they are Annihilated.

But 1. *Where are we commanded to believe thus implicitly in the Church?* and 2. *What is such a faith good for?*

1. *Where doth our Lord require this implicit faith in the Church?* He said (indeed) as he had reason, *Ye believe in God, believe also in Me*; but where did he say, Ye believe in Me, believe also in my Church? and

2. *To what purpose should he so command?* How is any man in-

spinited

ſpirited to holineſs, by believing he knoweth not what? What Fear or Love of God can be kindled, what Comfort or Joy advanced, what motive to Godlineſs actuated, by ſuch an *uncertain ſound*? Yea further, why muſt the Church in General, believe more than every member in Particular?

We diſpute not about words, and therefore grant the Church to be the Paſtors; but ſtill we aſk, why is it neceſſary even for Them, to believe more than our Lord himſelf required? If ſuch a belief be worth a Command, ſhew us wherein that worth conſiſteth, and you will at the ſame ſhew our Lord to be defective in omitting ſuch a command: But if it have in it nothing worth commanding, then thoſe who impoſe it, do at once Invade our Lord's Legiſlative power, and Defeat his gracious Purpoſe, of ſaving all that believe what himſelf required to be believed.

If there be any thing yet more intolerable, This perhaps may be ſo, That thoſe who deny the Pope this impoſing power, aſſume it to themſelves. *Heterodoxy* with Them ſignifieth no leſs danger, than doth *Hereſy* with the Papiſts. They that want either Courage or Care to examin what they are taught, deny it to others; and as they believe without Reaſon, ſo do they without Meaſure.

If ſuch a man light upon truth in every little queſtion, he muſt be very happy, ſince they are conteſted with equal confidence on either ſide, mutually condemning each other as *Heterodox*, when indeed both ſides are ſo; for the word properly ſignifieth ſuch as hold other opinions than the word of God hath revealed, and ſuch cannot be matter of Diſpute.

II. They who thus extend the Dominions, do alſo *exalt the Prerogative of Faith*, above 1. *Meaſure*, 2. *Holineſs*, 3. *Charity*, and 4. *Reaſon*.

1. *Thoſe who extend its dominions beyond its due limits, do alſo exalt its power above Meaſure.* I ſay, *thoſe who extend its dominions beyond its due limits*: For within them we readily acknowledg

it's power Absolute, and all obedience due to it without reserve.

But the proper dominions of Faith exceed not this one proposition, that *God cannot ly*. This is the Great commandment of the *Gospel*, and answereth the great one of the *Law*: as that saith thou shalt *Love*, so this saith thou shalt *Believe the Lord thy God with all thy Soul, and with all thy Might*: This, as it is a truth of infinite Certainty, so must it have infinite Power upon our belief, as we found it to have upon *Abraham*'s, in defiance of all oppositions that might have been made by Reason or Nature.

But there are other truths, and those (perhaps) vertually included in This Great one; the belief whereof must be Measured by the interest they may have in the proper vertue of faith, which we have found to be twofold. 1. *Justice to God's Veracity*, 2. *Serviceableness to Piety*.

1. Some Doctrines are the Immediate apparent issue of that great truth; so plainly published in the word of God, that he that runneth may read them: Others require close Application, a good Eye, and perhaps, good Art too: Must all these Doctrines, so Unequal in their Evidence, be received with Equal, and that Supream, Confidence?

If my confidence of the Truth of the Doctrine equal my Evidence that it is God's word, I make full payment of what is due to God's veracity: But if I doubt whether that which you tell me is God's word, be so indeed; this may be some defect of Justice to Your veracity, but it can be none to God's: Convince me that God hath said it, and my Confidence of the truth shall equal that Conviction; till then, neither is God's Veracity, nor my Faith concerned.

2. Another Worth of Faith is derived from its Serviceableness to that great and good end, for who's sake the promises are given us. And are those Doctrines which are imposed upon our belief as *de fide*, are they all Equally, all Supremely serviceable to holiness? Are not some More, some Less, and most of them Not at All so? And shall a Confidence equally Fruitless, Ground-

Groundleſs, and Boundleſs, be accepted for my juſtification, beyond a leſs Confident, but more Fruitful Belief, yea or Doubt of a propoſition, of which I have no better reaſon to believe that it cometh from God, but this, that you tell me ſo?

In a word, if for This end the promiſes be given us, *That by them we may be partakers of the divine nature* (as St. *Peter* expreſly affirms) then he that receiveth Them, and (which is more) he that receiveth any Other truths, with ſuch an Effectual faith, as ſhall transform him thereinto, receiveth them with Confidence enough.

II. Some exalt Faith *Above* Holineſs, yea and *Againſt* it too. Not only the thorough-paced Antinomians and Solifidians, but many others, who call themſelves Orthodox, finding no intrinſick worth, proportionable to the great price at which they find Faith valued; Wilfully or Haſtily overlooking its relation to Holineſs, borrow it a value from its relation to the Perſon of Chriſt, which no man doubteth to be infinitly valuable. *Faith* (ſay they) *is the hand whereby we apply Chriſt to our ſelves; and by this Application, Chriſt is made Ours, and His righteouſneſs imputed to us as if it were our own; and it Juſtifieth not by his Own worthineſs, but by the merit of Chriſt, which it layeth hold on and applyeth:* And by this pretty conceit, any degree of Real inhærent righteouſneſs is rendered not only Inſufficient, but Dangerous; there is more hope of the lewdeſt rakehell, than of a moral man, the preaching of the Church-of-*England*-men is deſpiſed, becauſe they preach not Jeſus Chriſt, nor Faith in him, but moral ſtuff *&c.*

If holineſs of life have any place among ſuch Doctrines, thanks muſt be paid to Gods over-ruling grace, and the deep impreſſions of Natural religion, not to be defaced by any oppoſite notions: For if Chriſt's righteouſneſs be imputed to me as if it were mine own, what need I labour for any other? Will not all ſuch labour be worſe than loſt? will it not caſt diſhonor upon Chriſt's Righteouſneſs as Inſufficient, and upon his Precepts,

cepts, as Needleſs? Need I, Can I be more righteous than Chriſt?

And where (in the name of Chriſt) where do we in all the book of God or in Reaſon, meet any intimation of this fine Doctrine? *Application of Chriſt to our ſelves, the hand of Faith, Imputed Righteouſneſs* &c. what are they but terms of art, invented by falſe Apoſtles? We read indeed that *Abraham*'s *faith was imputed to him for righteouſneſs*; and ſo ſhall it be imputed to us if we believe as He did: But ſtill it was *Abraham*'s Own proper faith, and not Anothers; and That faith was no leſs Obedient than Confident. But what is that to Chriſt's righteouſneſs imputed to us, and that only by virtue of laying hold upon him by an application inverted? not by Applying our ſelves to Chriſt, conforming our ſelves to his Precepts and Example; but Applying Him to our ſelves, by mere forceable laying hands upon him?

A certain Land was miſerably waſted by a rageing Plague: A great Phyſician in compaſſion to the people, came among them, declared that he had a *noſtrum* which never failed them that truſted it, that it had been to himſelf very coſtly, but he would freely communicate it to all that needed and deſired it, and therefore exhorted every one to come to him for it. Many did ſo, and were infallibly cured; but others ſaid, there needed no more, but to Truſt to the Medicine, the Phyſician was infinitly skilful in his Art, and faithful in his Promiſes; that therefore by confidence in him they ſhould have all his Health imputed to them, and That ſhould cure them as perfectly as if they received real health by uſe of his preſcriptions. This is the very caſe now upon the carpet: For look, how much the ſick Patient is cured by the imputed health of the Phyſician, without a Real remove of the Diſeaſe; juſt ſo much is ſuch a Believer juſtified by the righteouſneſs of Chriſt imputed to him upon his confident applying of Chriſt to himſelf, with aſſurance of his being one of the Elect, without applying himſelf to Chriſt by conforming to his Nature and Commands.

Let

Let us then for Christ's sake, let us apply our selves to him with all Assurance of his Power and Desire to save us; and let this Confidence deliver us up to an absolute submission to his conduct: But let us beware of trusting to his Imputed righteousness, without Real holiness; lest we obtain only Imputed Salvation, and fall into Real condemnation. And on the other side, let us beware also that we rob him not of our due acknowledgments: for what the Apostle saith of Faith in Abstract, is no less true of it in Conjunction with holiness. *By Faith working by Love we are saved, and that, not of our Selves, it is the gift of God.*

III. It is exalted above and against Charity, which it is it's duty and honor to serve. We have found one of the great ends of the Gospel to be the advancement of the divine life, whereof Charity is so great a part (if we may call it a Part) that however Great and Many things are spoken of *Faith*, Greater are spoken of *Love*. The Apostle is express in giving This the precedence, *And now abideth Faith, Hope, and Charity, these three, but the greatest of these is Charity.* More yet, he plainly declareth that Faith dependeth on it for its saving power, *In Christ Jesus nothing availeth but Faith working by Love.* And that this work may reach not our Lord only, but our Brother too, he exhorteth the Ephesians to it by This Argument, *There is one Lord, one Faith, one Baptisme*: But experience too plainly proveth, that whatever force *Unity of faith* may have for *unity of spirit in the bond of peace*; the same hath multiplication of articles of faith, for dividing of minds by schisms and feuds. For while the Christian world had but *one Faith*, their mutual love was the wonder and envy of their enemies: but from the time that it received additionals, and every new Doctrine became a new Religion, the mutual hatred of several sects hath been no less wonderful.

For so much greater regard hath every one for his Particular belief (which he calleth his Religion) than for that General

ral faith wherein All agree; that his neighbors Dissent therein, weigheth more Against charity, than his Agreement in the Greatest truths can do for it.

The good Emperors argument was no less Unprosperous than Pious, whereby he endeavoured to cool the heat of the contending parties, in the first and most uncharitable dispute that ever rent the Christian world: *Philosophers* (said he;) *though in many things they Differ, yet while they Agree in the main, do not Hate one another for their differences in Few things, but Love one another for their Agreement in the rest; and why should not We do so, who profess a more Loving Religion?* If we seek the solution of this riddle only from the nature of Faith, or from Scripture or Reason, we shall never get satisfaction; but as soon as we cast our eye upon the Interests and Pretences of the Church of *Rome*, we immediately meet it. For when Doctrines are Multiplied and Entangled, and men wheedled into apprehensions that their Salvation dependeth upon their right belief in every one of them; then will they be glad to shelter their unsatisfied consciences in the bosome of That Church, which promiseth them safety: But if any be so bold as to question That fundamental, and thereby shake the power and greatness which is built upon it, however Slight the Matter of the question be, the very questioning of the Churches determinations is Damnable, the man is an Heretick, and as an Heretick he must be handled. He must be cast into the Inquisition-prison, there he must languish in Darkness and Nastiness, in Hunger and Cold, and all kinds of misery, until the season come for an *Act of Faith* (for by that title they express their *oyer* and *terminer* which is mostly but *triennial*:) then is the wretch put upon his trial, and if found guilty, he is arrayed in a coat painted with fire and devils, wherein he is burnt alive, and the people are made to believe, that after death he must suffer in hell what is so represented in his coat, and executed upon his body, and he must lose what all other malefactors enjoy, the charity of their prayers.

This

This they call an *Act of Faith*, and is ſolemnly executed upon as many as that holy court of Inquiſition can get into their pounces.

God be bleſſed, thoſe curſt Cows have ſhort horns; That court reacheth not all countries, but the uncharitableneſs of *Rome* doth. There is no reproach ſo great as that of Heretick: to be out of the boſome of the Church is to be out of God's favour, he is hated of God, and muſt be ſo of all that love God.

Such is the effect of multiplying articles of Faith.

IV. It is exalted above and againſt REASON: and ſo deſtroyeth the foundation whereon it ſelf is built: For we have found this to be the eſſential virtue of Faith, that it is Juſtice to God's Faithfulneſs: and This is therefore moſt Juſt becauſe moſt Reaſonable.

Nor is it leſs true in the retail: Nothing is to be believed further than Reaſon proveth it to be True. Our Lord himſelf appealed to it for the belief which he required: He pleaded his Miracles for Evidence, and thence claimed judgment.

Yea, thoſe who require us to renounce our Reaſon, appeal to it themſelves: For they pretend to give us reaſon why we ſhould renounce it, and ſo contradict themſelves no leſs than they do Reaſon. They are indeed no better than the ravings in Bedlam which we hear: It was a caſt of *Tertullian*'s Montaniſm which tranſported him into ſuch extravagance as to ſay, *Credo quia impoſſibile eſt.* And the Author of *Religio Medici*, when he ſaid, *There are not Contradictions enough in Religion for an Active Faith*, might have remember'd, that exceſs of Confidence in defect of Reaſon, is a certain ſymptom of Madneſs.

It is true, in all ſubjects, in all arts and ſciences, Reaſon is pleaded for Error; but again it is confuted by greater reaſon, as Stars are by the Sun, which baffleth and ſilenceth their weaker light.

Abraham believed in Hope Againſt Hope. It appeared impoſſible in Nature that *Iſaac* ſhould be a father after he were ſacri-

ficed: but it appeared more impoſſible, that God ſhould ly, than that he ſhould do more than nature: What I know to be the word of God, I believe infinitly, becauſe I infinitly know God to be infinitly true: But that This is God's Word, and This the Meaning of it, I So far only believe, as I find Reaſon for it; For as in Juſtice to God's revealed word, I am bound to pay it my utmoſt belief; ſo in Juſtice to his word written in my heart, I am to refuſe my belief till ſome evidence make it appear due.

You ſay, Religion hath *Myſteries*; let us therefore conſider what a *Myſtery* is. In the Old Teſtament we find not the word: in the New, we find it conſiſt of two parts, the One Open, the Other Secret. Sometimes it ſignifieth a Spiritual truth wrapt up in a Senſible, thus the Union of Chriſt with his Church, is a Myſtery contained in that of a man with his Wife. Sometimes a truth hidden from ſome *Ages*; thus St. *John* proclaimeth the Goſpel to have been *hidden from the beginning*, but then *made manifeſt*: Or from ſome *Perſons*, thus our Lord ſaid to his Diſciples, *to you is given to know the Myſteries of the kingdome of God, but to others in parables.*

And this is the moſt uſual ſence of the word in *Pagan* writers, and from them, with ſome other of their conceits, entertained by ſuch ages of the Church as are held in great veneration. The *Myſta* knew ſome rules for Religious Worſhip, which he learned from books locked up in Archives, not acceſſible to the people; The fathers of the Chriſtian Church at firſt ſo imitated them, as to hide from the Catechumens the Rites of Sacraments, which from thence took the name of the Myſteries; and herein they were ſo cautious of concealing the form of adminiſtring the Euchariſt eſpecially, that they durſt not commit the words to writing, ſo much as in a letter to a Biſhop, leaſt they might by ſome accident fall into uncapable hands. And after-ages came cloſer up to their pattern, by telling the Laity, that implicite faith in the Church muſt ſatisfy them in Myſteries of Faith.

So the word plainly importeth two contrary Aſpects upon two different Perſons; Hid to the one, and Open to the other: But that it ſhould at the ſame Time, and to the ſame Perſons, be both Hid and Open, is more than a hidden Myſtery; it is an open Contradiction, and it is no leſs ſo, that I muſt believe what is hidden from my underſtanding.

If the Goſpel profeſs it ſelf to be a Revealer of Myſteries, then, to tell me, that it concealeth ſome truths as Myſteries, yet requireth me to believe them; this is no leſs a calumny upon the Goſpel, than an abuſe of the Word.

He that telleth the laity, that they muſt be ſatisfied with implicit faith in the church, ſpeaketh the language of a Pagan Myſtagogue; but a faithful preacher of the Goſpel muſt juſtify himſelf to his people in the language of St. *Paul* to the elders of *Epheſus, I have kept back nothing that was profitable for you.*

Some may judge of ſuch a church as boaſteth of Myſteries, by what is written in *Rev.*17. and take That for a ſummary anſwer to our preſent Enquiry, concerning the *changes which later ages have made in the Faith and Church of Chriſt:* From ſimple Nakedneſs, to Gold, Purple, Scarlet, and precious ſtones; from Plain truth preached and believed by the meaneſt, to Myſteries; from the moſt affectionate *Love*, to *drunkenneſs with the blood of Saints*; from the chaſt Spouſe of Chriſt, to a *great Whore and Mother of Harlots.* But what truth may lie in ſuch a cenſure, we may find more fully by our next Enquiry.

ENQUIRY III.

What Damages or Advantages have enſued upon the changes and additions which later ages have made in the Goſpel?

THis Enquiry is double, and requires a ballance, that in one ſcale we may lay the *Damages*, in the other the *Advantages*, and ſo weigh the one againſt the other.

Firſt then, we will conſider the DAMAGES, and Them in relation to three ſubjects;

1. *To our Lord and his Goſpel.*
2. *To private Chriſtians in Particular.*
3. *To the Chriſtian Church in General.*

1. *To our Lord's honour* theſe changes bring as great Damages, and in as proper a ſence, as any contumelious doctrines can: They repreſent him not as a Good and Wiſe Prince, whoſe laws tend to the happineſs of his people; but as a Capricious and humorous one, that without any other motive than his unaccountable Will, impoſeth a ſtupid belief, of a multitude of Impertinent and Incredible propoſitions, Without, yea (ſome of them) Againſt all Reaſon, without any other fruit but (what he moſt hateth) ſtrife, contrary to that Simplicity wherein the Goſpel glorieth, and to the contempt which God himſelf ſheweth to acts of mere Underſtanding.

In reference to the Animal life, we find that he meaſureth to us Knowledge by our Needs. Though we can hardly know any thing to the bottom, yet we know Sufficient to anſwer the requires of our life. Thouſands of years paſſed, before it was queſtioned, whether the Earth or the Sun move, and it is ſtill a queſtion. The diſcoveries of the Teleſcope and Microſcope

are

are new, yet do they both ſhew us admirable news, one in a multitude of unthought of ſtars, the other in a world of wonderful pretty beauties: And the many diſcoveries which Anatomy hath lately made in our bodies, do not ſo much contribute to our Knowledge as our Wonder, nor at all inſtruct us in the operation of our Bodies or Minds. The ſame Conduct is viſible in reference to Spiritual life: Our Lord hath plainly Revealed, and required us to Believe, what is ſufficient for the Divine life; but in queſtions no way ſerviceable thereto, innocent Ignorance, yea and Error, will no more deſtroy our Souls, than an error in Philoſophy will our Bodies.

But that he ſhould require Exact and Confident belief in every queſtion, which a ranging invention can ſtartl; that he ſhould by his Apoſtle require us to *Avoid fooliſh queſtions, as knowing that they gender ſtrife*, yet to believe the truth in every one of them; that to prevent our miſtakes in ſuch forbidden queſtions he ſhould ſtabliſh an Oracle, which at pleaſure might coin them into artieles of Faith; Theſe are ſuch contradictions both among themſelves, and to the Wiſdom of God, that no error can be more diſhonourable to him, than ſo vile a conceit of his conduct.

If further we deſcend to particulars, take an Inventory of the thus impoſed new articles of Faith, their irreconcileable oppoſition with the plaineſt Sence and Reaſon, their impudent pimping for the Prieſts intereſts, their extravagant impertinence to any other end *&c*; and then compare ſuch a Goſpel, with that gracious one which our Lord and his Apoſtles preached; we ſhall find greater cauſe of wonder, that the profeſſors of Chriſt's religion ſhould ſo impudently corrupt it, than that God ſhould ſo change his countenance toward it, as in our Introduction we ſaw reaſon both to Complain and Juſtifie.

The Faith which at firſt prevailed over the world, was no leſs ſuitable to the *Nature*, than to the *Needs* of mankind. That every man needed a *Mediator* between a holy God and himſelf, every man's own guilty conſcience convinced him; that *the*

ſon

ſon of God came into the world to perform that neceſſary office, promiſing pardon and everlaſting life to thoſe that would believe in him as ſuch; was a doctrine, ſo Eaſie to the Underſtanding, ſo Welcom to the Deſires, and ſo obligingly offered, that as ſoon as it courted the world, it won upon it.

But had the Apoſtles brought the modern goſpel either to the learned Greeks or rude Barbarians, told them that God had ſent his ſon into the world to ſave them that would believe, not only in Himſelf, but in his Vicar too; ſhould they then have opened their packs of impertinent Myſteries, declared that ſome men thereto firſt qualified by a few words, ſhould afterward by other five words turn a bit of bread into the body of God, which himſelf and others muſt firſt Worſhip, and then eat *&c.*; If ſuch ſtuff as this had been preached, and ſuch credulity as cannot be juſtified from Folly, made the condition whereon men muſt hope to be juſtified from all their ſins; what conſidering man would not rather ſtick to the Religion of his fathers, whatever it were, than change it for one ſo much worſe?

Yes! ſuch a Religion muſt appear much worſe than any other; for the Apologiſts, who upon this topick pleaded for the Chriſtian religion againſt the Pagan, though they ſufficiently expoſed the groſs follies of the latter, yet could not charge it with ſo many and groſs ones, as thoſe which ſwarm in that one doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation; nor hath *Mahomet* among all his whimſies any thing comparable to it.

What wonder now that the Goſpel cannot gain any country upon Heatheniſm, and hath loſt ſo many to Mahumetiſm? yea, what wonder if in its own bowels it ſuffer ſo much by Atheiſm? What wonder that no Religion is ſo much peſtered by it as the Chriſtian, no country ſo much as that, where this oracle hath its ſeat?

When a bold perſon heareth his teacher avow, that it were as good be of no religion at all, as of any other than That, of whoſe corruptions he is convinced, (though to an indifferent underſtanding nothing be more incredible, yet) his luſt will

ſoon

ſoon perſwade him to take the Doctor at his word, and reject All religion for the ſake of the corrupt one.

If therefore Heatheniſm, Mahumetiſm, or Atheiſm, be enemies to the Goſpel; the changes which later ages have made in it, muſt be imputed to their authors, as ſo many treſpaſſes againſt it, and be condemned in ſuitable Damages.

II. As the changes made in the Faith are diſhonourable to our Lord and his Goſpel, ſo are they *pernicious to the Church of Chriſt*, both in its *Particular members*, and its *Publick Body* as the Spouſe of Chriſt.

1. *They are pernicious to Private Chriſtians*, by robbing them of much of that happineſs which the Goſpel is deſigned to bring them; which we have found to be, 1. *Participation of the divine nature*, 2. *Fulneſs of joy*.

1. They rob good men of much of *that Godlineſs*, which otherwiſe they ſhould have attained. The Apoſtle beſeecheth us *as ſtrangers and pilgrims, to abſtain from fleſhly luſts which war againſt the ſoul*. That war is made by Diverſion: *Wine and Women take away the heart*; they divert the Soul, from labouring for the Divine life, to wallowing in the Brutiſh; and were it poſſible to compute how much miſchief every luſt doth this way, we ſhould certainly find that no One, nor (perhaps) All together, would be found ſo pernicious, as this One Luſt of Diſputing and Impoſing: For by This One, All the reſt are ſo far ſtrengthened, as our forces are diverted from warring againſt them.

The more we diſpute againſt our *Brethren*, the leſs we diſpute againſt our *Luſts*: that ardor of Zeal, which elſe would have flamed up in divine Love, mouldereth away in the black ſmoaky heats of Bitter zeal.

Very Happy ſure muſt the great diſputers be, whoſe luſts are ſo mortified, that can ſpare ſo much of their Time and Affections, to be plaid away at this puſh-pin: or very Unhappy, if they waſte ſo much of them both, while their Luſts remain unconfuted;

confuted, yea, they are unhappy if, having baffled their Lusts, they lose so much of Joy, and of Encrease in Godliness, as with the same Labor, and infinitely Greater Benefit, they might have purchased.

The greatest part of mankind (we see) hath not souls large enough to entertain both sorts of zeal: But look how much there is of zeal for what they think Faith, against what they call Heresy, so much is lost from Love of God and our Neighbour, and from Reformation of the most mortal Errors of our Lives.

2. They rob good men of that *Fulness of Joy* which is the design of the Gospel. *The wicked* (saith the Prophet) *are like the troubled sea which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.* If it be miserable to be tossed with storms, then are disputes in matters of Faith miserably pernicious; not only by hindering mens minds from warring against the lusts which raise those storms, but by raising others no less tempestuous, between Faith imposing things incredible, and Reason resisting such Impositions.

Where is that considering person who escapeth those storms? There are that tell us stories of the Roman priests themselves, that they frequently confess, that all their struglings cannot subdue their Reason to a Belief of the doctrine of Transubstantiation, and that their Confessors also in their turns confess the same to their Confessors; but cannot either Give or Receive such penance, as can remove the incurable evil. What conflicts must such contrary winds necessarily raise in a soul infinitely Desirous and equally Unable to believe!

Moralists promise us Peace and Joy if we subdue our Lusts. Apostles upon better warrant make us the same promises. Alas! now we find Another, and that an Invincible enemy, made of That very Friend, by whose help we were to have obtained that victory. By help of good Reason, assisted by God's Grace, we may subdue our Lusts; but how shall we subdue our Reason, which as it is our own Nature, without which we cannot be Men, so it is the Image of God, and like its original,

Im-

Immortal and Invincible? Muſt we deface God's Image, that we may partake his Nature? Fight againſt him *in effigie*, that we may obey him in his Vicar? This were to perform contradictions that we may believe them, and we ſhall find the one no leſs above our ſtrength than the other; but after all endeavours, either to Satisfy or Stupify our minds, we ſhall never be able to Quiet them.

A hard warfare indeed! Firſt by our Reaſon we muſt fight againſt our Luſts; and then by Faith we muſt fight our Reaſon; which yet we muſt find Invincible, and ſo the war deſperate.

Is it thus *the peace of God paſſeth all underſtanding*? Muſt we out-run *all underſtanding*, that we may overtake *Peace*? Is it thus that *believing we rejoice with joy unſpeakable and glorious*? Or is this the *good fight of faith*, which we are by the Apoſtle encouraged to fight, and by experience find unproſperous?

Another, and no leſs unhappy war, do theſe additional doctrines raiſe toward our Brethren, whom they tempt us to hate and perſecute, under pretence of anſwering *Jude*'s al'arm, *to contend earneſtly for the faith*. Something of this we have ſeen under the conſideration that *Faith is exalted above Charity*, and ſomething more we ſhall ſee in obſerving the miſchiefs which accrew to the Church of Chriſt in its *publick capacity*, to which therefore we haſten without ſtop at the mutual enmities between private Chriſtians, however Viſible and Lamentable.

III. The next ſubject of damage is the *Church of Chriſt on its General capacity*: and This indeed is concerned in all the reſt. For the Community, which is the Catholick church, is the Spouſe of Chriſt, whoſe happineſs is the Adequate End of the Goſpel, whoſe every Promiſe and Precept is imployed as a Means to ſerve it, and therefore whatever croſſeth this good deſign, if it come from our Lord, muſt Diſhonor his conduct.

Again, the Catholick church is a Body compact of ſingle Members, whoſe ſeveral Happineſs or Pain affecteth the whole.

Whether our Lord hath been Faithful or Defective in his care for the happineſs of every Particular and the whole Community, how ſhall we examin? *If* by his Own and his Apoſtles precepts, no Religion in the world could ever vie with the Goſpel, either in Precepts or Arguments for the deareſt Love, the greateſt happineſs of the Church, as well Triumphant as Militant: If by the Practice of its Profeſsors, none ever ſtirred up ſuch mutual Quarrels among Private perſons, ſuch cruel Perſecutions by Princes, ſuch bloody Wars between Nations.

Our Lord indeed appointed it for an *Incendiary*, but its fires were to be thoſe of the moſt ardent Love: it is from the Corruptions of later ages, that thoſe lambent flames are by bitter zeal changed to devouring fires. Our Lord's great Apoſtle ſaith, that *in Chriſt Jeſus nothing availeth but Faith working by Love*; but his pretended Vicar ſaith, Nothing availeth but Faith working by Zeal, and the beſt Zeal is the moſt Bitter.

The armies which blind zeal raiſed for the recovery of the Holy land from infidels, have been diverted by this *bitter zeal*, for the Corrupters of the Chriſtian Faith, againſt the oppoſers of thoſe Corruptions; and pardon of ſin promiſed to ſuch as ſhould loſe their lives in ſo holy a cauſe; wherein how many have been deſtroyed who can compute? Some have done their endeavours, who give us this account.

Of *Albigenſes* and *Waldenſes* ſlain nine hundred thouſand. From thence to the Reformation no man hath ſett down the account of them that have been cut off, partly by fire, partly by the ſword, partly by other torments. From the beginning of the *Jeſuits* to the year 1580, in little more than thirty years, *Baldwinus* noteth almoſt nine hundred thouſands put to death by the alone hand of the executioner. The D. of *Alva* gloried in the ſlaughter of ſix and thirty thouſands in *Belgium* only in a few years. *Vergerius* witneſſeth, that the Inquiſition in ſcarce thirty years conſumed a hundred and fifty thouſands by ſeveral kinds of torments. We cannot ſtop our ears or eyes ſo hard, as to avoid the lamentable ſight and complaint of our next neighbors ſuf-

ſuffering (under him that calleth himſelf *the moſt Chriſtian King*, and glorieth in the atchievment) more than Any, yea than All the primitive Chriſtians ſuffered under thoſe whom our fathers called cruel Perſecutors, but this compariſon will repreſent as mild Princes.

Aſtoniſhment and grief here ſtop us; we therefore turn to examin what weight the other Scale carrieth.

II. What Advantages accreweth by the changes which later Ages have made in the Faith of the Goſpel?

Here we muſt crave the grant of two Suppoſitions.

1. *That the Clergy in oppoſition to the People, and the church of Rome in oppoſition to all other Churches, is Chriſt's Spouſe, and conſequently what is gained to that Spouſe is gained to Chriſt himſelf.*

2. *That the Temporal advantages which accrew to that ſpouſe, may be equivalent to the ſouls which may be loſt to purchaſe them.*

Unleſs theſe two ſmall conceſſions may be granted, we have not a word to ſay; but if they be, That church will ſhew ſuch Gains, as if they fall ſhort of the full value, yet ſhall be ſure to avoid the complaint of *David*, that they *ſell God's people for nought, and take no money for them.* It is confeſſed, *Money* in kind, is not ſo properly the gain made by this part of the Goſpel, yet may it be reduced hither: For were not mens Underſtandings muffeled by implicit faith, they could never be ſo groſly cheated, as they are in the doctrines of Repentance. But That *houſe of merchandiſe* we may take another time to viſit; at preſent we are in purſuit of a nobler game, *Honour*, and *Power*; and in theſe we ſhall divide the Gains as we did the Damages. For as in Thoſe we conſidered what accrewed to God, and what to Man; ſo in Theſe we ſhall *what is gotten to the Pope as Chriſt's Vicar, and what to inferior Prieſts as his Officers.*

I. The POPE, under the character of *Chriſt's vicar*, by Changes and Additions made in the faith of the Goſpel, hath gotten

that boundleſs Honour and Power, to which otherwiſe he hath no pretence.

It is not a word or two of our Lord, ſtrained beyond the mind of the ſpeaker; it is not his *Paſce oves*, or *Tu es Petrus*, that can move a ſerious man, to any thing but aſtoniſhment at ſuch boldneſs, as dares with intolerable impudence burleſque our Lord's words; but is the pretended neceſſity of an *infallible chair*, which hath advanced That Biſhop, not only above all other *Biſhops*, but above all *Princes* in the world.

For what can ſet a ſtrand to That power, which can impoſe upon mens belief without bounds? What can make ſuch an exorbitant power credible, if the *Need* appear not great as the *Abſurdity*? And what colour of ſuch *Need*, if the bounds of Faith he not enlarged, beyond thoſe narrow ones which our Lord ſet? But when matters of belief are ſo multiplied, that it is impoſſible for a man of ordinary buſineſs in the world, not only to *Underſtand* them, but even to *Number* them; when in moſt of them, ſometimes Two, ſometimes More parties, contend with equal confidence; and can be brought to no other agreement but in This, that they cannot be too zealous for the truth; what is this, but a ſtate of War between the diſputants, and of Doubts in the by-ſtanders? and how can Peace be obtained without a living Arbitrator?

Thus the diſputacity of Doctors made an infallible chair appear neceſſary, and thoſe who ſit in That Chair, have ſo far made it Infallible, as to determin what is moſt advntageous to themſelves; for they have thereby gained Honor and Power, Boundleſs as their matters of Faith, and Incredible as their Myſteries.

Their (*a*) Canon-law declareth and pretendeth to prove by *Gen.* 1. that the *Pope is as much greater than the Emperor, as the Sun is than the Moon*; and (*b*) *ſo much better than other Kings, as Gold is better than Lead.* This is modeſt, if their power in im-

(a) *Greg de maior. & obed. c. ſolita.* (b) *Diſtinct. 96. c. duo ſunt.*

poſing

posing Faith, be more arbitrary than that of Emperors and Kings in imposing Taxes.

Their Supremacy over other Bishops is derived from the same fountain. The same unhappy controversy which made others *Disputacious*, made the Bishop of Rome *Supreme*. The gain that he made of the entertainment, which he so often gave to *Athanasius* and his party, was this: He thence took advantage to claim a negative in Councils, and afterward the sole power of determining controversies out of Council. And how much he must be above the rest of mankind, who is so much above all other Bishops, we may (I was about to say Compute) admire by the next part of our enquiry, the gain of the Priests.

II. The PRIESTS have exalted themselves above the People, as much as the Pope above all Princes and Bishops. That they might keep the Laity at greater distance, they have doubly abused them; first by Multiplying and Entangling the doctrines of Faith, and then by witholding the Light that should clear them: At the same time *Surfeiting* them with a glut of Doctrines, and *Starving* them with a famin of the bread of life. So the Gospel is to them both kinds of Wilderness; Bare as the sands of *Africk* (without Path or Landmark) for want of Scripture; yet thick-wooded as the hills of *Zeilan* (whose bushes none can creep through) by multitudes of Doctrines: So that those whom education hath enabled to understand the language wherein the Scripture was written, find Scholastick divinity so overgrown with briars, that they think it Better, and are willing to believe those who perswade them so, to lie in Ease and Ignorance, taking Images for their Books, and Priests for their Oracles, than tire themselves with such entangling studies.

Yea, which is yet more intolerable, they keep the people ignorant, not only of God's word to Them, but of their Own to God, locking up their own publick prayers in the same unknown tongue with the Scriptures. *Ignorance* (say they) *is the mother of devotion*: it is so, but of devotion toward the Priest,

not toward God; for where there is no Light in the Understanding, what Heat can there be in the Affections? What Devotion without Love, and what Love without some knowledge of the Object? St. *John* telleth us, *We love God because he loved us first*, but then he supposeth we know it. St *James* requireth, that *we pray in faith*, but he supposeth we know what we ask. But if I depend upon the Priest, both for God's word to Me and Mine to God, what is he less than God's Oracle, and how much more than My Mediator? And upon either office, the claim that he maketh to my greatest reverence will be as Just as it is Insolent, which that it is sufficiently, appears by these their demands.

Stanislaus Onicharius saith, that a *common Priest is as much better than a King, as a Man is better than a Beast*; yea further, that *as far as God Almighty doth excell a Priest, so much doth a Priest excell a King.* (a) If you desire to know what particular beast, *Gaspar Schioppius* will inform you: *Lay-men* (saith he) *are Asses, Mules, or Horses; the Romanist a Tame-ass, the Heretick a wild one.* (b) *Catholick Kings are the Leading-asses with bells*, Reges Catholici sunt asini cum tintinnabulo.

Thank them heartily! We *Hereticks* are the wiser, that keep our selves (*Wild*, as they call it) Free, as Nature made us; not suffer our selves to be saddled, laden with burdens, whereof we know nothing but the heaviness, driven we know not whither, nor why, and lashed by insolent masters. Such usage is enough to make those turn Wild, whom education hath Tamed.

The Proverb telleth us, that *did the Horse know his own strength, he would not endure such usage as now he doth*: And what hindereth us from knowing the strength of our own mind? We have the same Scripture, we have the same Faculties whereby to understand it, and we have more certainty of our own Sincerity than we can have of our Masters: what hindereth us

(a) *Chimara. fol. 97.* (b) *Ecclesiasticen. cap. 147.*

from

from taking the Bleſſed King's advice, Not to take our Religion from other men's Traditions, but our own Judgments?

If we can have the boldneſs to believe this, which even our Riders cannot deny, That nothing can be matter of Saving faith, but what the author of our faith made ſo; and that the Scripture hath faithfully informed us of what he ſaid in that great point; we may ſoon know our ſelves to be no leſs infallible than the Pope pretendeth to be: And if we can as eaſily ſhake off the loads which our Luſts impoſe, as thoſe which the Schoolmen do; we may then enjoy that true Liberty, whereof our Redeemer ſaith, *If the Son make you free, you ſhall be Free indeed.*

The CONCLUSION.

THE end of all is to determin between Faith *and* Charity, *as our Lord did between* God and Cæſar: Give unto Faith the things that are Faith's, and to Charity the things that are Charity's: *To Faith its due* Bounds, *and to Charity its due* Boundleſneſs; *to Faith the Praiſe of a good* Servant, *and to Charity the Honor of a good* Lord; *to Faith the power to Advance Love, but not to Diminiſh it.*

That it is ſerviceable to Advance Love, we have experiment in the Apoſtle's argument Eph. 4, 5. *where he exhorteth to* keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace, *upon this account,* There is One Lord, One Faith *&c. That it may be abuſed to the Prejudice of Love, appeareth from the warning he gave to* Timothy *to* Avoid Fooliſh and Unlearned queſtions, knowing that they gender ſtrife: *That we may know how to diſtinguiſh the* Queſtions *which we muſt* Avoid, *from the* Faith, *for which St.* Jude *exhorteth us* earneſtly to Contend, *nothing can be more neceſſary than to take a Survey of that Theological* terra del fuego, *whereof ſo much is ſpoken and ſo little known, but Smoak and Fire;* Smoak *from that mul-*

multitude of questions which the Schoolmen have raised from almost every clause of Scripture, thereby bringing Darkness out of Light; and Fire *from that immoderate heat, wherewith some mens zeal persecuteth those who differ from them in some beloved Opinion, as if they* denied the Faith.

In this necessary work we have laboured with all possible Sincerity, and, we hope with good Evidence. We have examined the Nature and Worth of Faith in general; then what Extraordinary reasons there might be for the Importunities and Encouragements allowed it by our Lord and his Apostles in Their days; some we found Proper for those times, but out-dated in Ours, and One only Permanent, viz. *its Serviceableness to Holiness: We then Particularly enquired what is that Belief, which was therefore so Valuable, because so Serviceable:* [redacted] *And if upon full and free enquiry, we find that our obligation exceeds not the most obvious Significance of the command requiring our belief, and the Serviceableness thereof to Piety; good Lord! what a Large and Fruitful Country doth that little Enclosure leave for Charity to our Neighbours and our Selves! What endearments to Love those who by the same Faith are Heirs of the same Promises! What liberty from digging in hard fruitless Questions! What leisure to banquet upon* the fruits of the Spirit! *What Charms for every docible understanding! How Easy to the Simplest! How Satisfactory to the Wisest!*

Will the Reader receive these few Sheets with the same Sincerity, wherewith they are offered, he cannot scratch the Hand that hath employed it self in devesting the Gospel of those Dresses, wherewith the unhappy Officiousness of Doctors pretending to Adorn it, have really Disguised it: For he will find the Light of the Gospel like that of the Sun, most glorious in its Nakedness; and prefer the Simplicity which is in Christ, *before all the Subtleties that are in the Schools.*

FINIS.